





## Relatives prepare to bury Hajj victims as Saudi press blames unruly crowds

MECCA (AFP) — Families of 118 Muslims killed in a stampede at the annual Hajj prepared Saturday to bury their dead in the Holy City of Mecca, amid accusations pilgrims failed to heed crowd control warnings.

Two days after Thursday's tragedy during the "Stoning of Satan" religious ritual in Mina, in the Saudi Arabian desert east of Mecca, authorities have succeeded in firmly identifying only 66 of the dead.

Several pilgrims have already been buried at a cemetery known as Janat Al Maala or Heavenly Paradise, near Mecca and more relatives are expected to ask for their loved ones to be laid to rest at Islam's most sacred site.

Of the 118 who were trampled or plunged to their death on Thursday, the authorities have identified 24 Indians, nine Pakistanis, nine Turks,

seven Algerians, five Saudi nationals, four Moroccans, three Bangladeshis, two Egyptians, two Indonesians and one Kuwaiti.

Muslims believe that those who die performing the Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam and a duty at least once in a lifetime for all who can afford it, are granted immediate entry to paradise.

The Saudi kingdom traditionally allows the faithful who die during the pilgrimage to be buried at Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, or Medina, Islamic's second most sacred site.

The pilgrimage, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world and attended this year by 1.7 million Muslims from 100 nations, has been frequently blighted by tragedy despite Saudi efforts to control the crowds.

Before Thursday's stampede, an estimated 700,000

pilgrims had packed onto an overpass to throw stones at three pillars representing the devil, one of the final Hajj rituals.

Saudi Pilgrimage Minister Mahmoud Ben Mohammad Safar told the Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper on Friday that the catastrophe was the result of pilgrims failing to heed advice given at the entry and exit to the pillar area.

No one in the world can deny the enormous sacrifices made by the Saudi kingdom to assure the safety of pilgrims and responsibility for the accident must be borne by those who failed to explain to pilgrims "how to perform the ritual safely," said Okaz newspaper.

"It is the will of God," said Al Nadwa newspaper, adding: "The tragedy of Mina should not in any way lessen the success of efforts for completion of the pilgrimage."

Zakur Rahman, the Indian

consul in charge of the Hajj, whose country suffered the heaviest toll, said up to seven Indian pilgrims have already been buried at their families' request.

"None of the relatives have asked yet for the bodies [to be repatriated] and we think the others will be buried in Mecca," Mr. Rahman said, adding that another two or three Indians may be among the dead.

A Turkish official said the nine victims would be buried at Mecca.

Saudi Health Minister Ossama Ben Abdul Majid Shabkashi said most of the pilgrims injured during the crush had been released from hospital.

"Of the 162 injured pilgrims admitted to hospitals in Mina, Mecca and Jeddah after the stampede, only around a dozen are being kept under supervision," he told Al Ryad newspaper.



Iranian Interior Minister Abdullah Nuri addresses Tehran municipality employees Saturday, one week after Mayor Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi was arrested on corruption charges. Mr. Nuri denounced the arrest as an attempt to destabilise President Mohammad Khatami's moderate government (AFP photo)

## Supporters of Tehran's imprisoned mayor mobilising for his defence

TEHRAN (AFP) — Supporters of Tehran Mayor Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, arrested a week ago on corruption charges, are mobilising to rescue him from what they say is a politically-motivated attack by conservatives.

In an unprecedented move, 34 members of the radical-moderate coalition close to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called for the "personal intervention" of Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to put an end to "attempts" by conservatives to "weaken the government."

The interior ministry is to set up a "defence committee" for the embattled mayor, the official news agency IRNA reported Saturday.

Iranian Interior Minister Abdullah Nuri said the committee would be up and running by Sunday and would provide the Iranian people with a list of the mayor's achievements.

The interior minister, considered the mayor's principal backer in the government, visited Mr. Karbaschi's home in the residential north of the capital on Friday to meet his wife and assure her of his support.

Mr. Karbaschi, 44, was arrested a week ago on charges of "embezzlement and diverting public funds" in connection with a corruption scandal in the city government. A dozen of his aides have already been convicted and jailed.

Mr. Karbaschi's supporters warned in an open letter that "the prolongation of this situation will face the regime and the country with a serious crisis."

In a speech to mayors of the capital's 20 boroughs Saturday Mr. Nuri again denounced Mr. Karbaschi's arrest as "arbitrary."

"It is astonishing for a government official to be arrested by a judge and held like a common law prisoner dressed in a prison uniform," Mr. Nuri told the mayors.

Participants in the meeting, who included Mr. Karbaschi's wife, called for the Tehran mayor's "immediate release," IRNA reported.

Mr. Karbaschi's wife has been allowed to visit her husband in Evin jail in the north of the capital, the moderate daily Jameeh reported Saturday without giving any details of when the visit took place.

Last week Faezeh Hashemi, MP and daughter of former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, condemned the ban on visits to the imprisoned mayor.

Mr. Karbaschi was held "in a cell with another prisoner" and "had the right to half an hour a day outside," Jameeh reported.

The radical and moderate press are daily running full-page stories supporting the embattled mayor.

Nearly 700 mayors of cities and villages around Iran have called on Mr. Khatami to "not let honest administrators and people like Karbaschi be sacrificed to partisan political interests."

Student associations and political figures have threatened to call street demonstrations for Tuesday in favour of the mayor.

Conservatives struck back Friday by disrupting a sermon in Esfahan in which an imam (prayer leader) supported the mayor. Some 50 people reported to be members of the fundamentalist Hizbollah shouted "Death to Karbaschi" and "Death to Montazeri" during the sermon by Ayatollah Jaleddine Taheri.

## Political executions top 1,500 in Iraq in 1997 — U.N.

GENEVA (AFP) — More than 1,500 political executions were believed to have taken place in Iraq last year, according to a report to be presented to the United Nations on Tuesday.

"On the basis of all available information, it is highly probable that more than 1,500 summary, arbitrary or extrajudicial executions for political purposes have been carried out throughout the year, most of them during the 'Prison Cleansing Campaign' of November and December 1997," the report said.

The report was prepared by the special rapporteur on human rights in Iraq, Max van der Stoep, for presentation to the U.N. human rights commission here on Tuesday.

Copies of the report were made available to the press Saturday.

The rapporteur, who has been refused access by Baghdad since 1992, based his report on information from victims, witnesses and others which his officers had been able to corroborate.

Referring to the prison campaign, the report said there was "strong evidence that hundreds of prisoners have been executed in Abu Ghraib and Radwaniyah prisons since August 1997."

Executions increased in November and December following a visit to Abu Ghraib prison by Qusay Saddam Hussein, head of the country's special security organisation, the report alleged.

The campaign "is said to have involved detainees either sentenced to death or condemned to 15 years of detention and over."

It was reported that the executions were carried out by shooting, hanging or electrocution, with relatives of the executed having to pay the value of the bullet used for the executions in order to recover the bodies.

## Turkish troops kill 10 Kurdish rebels near Mediterranean resort

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish troops have killed 10 separatist Kurdish rebels in two clashes near Turkey's most popular tourism resort, Antalya on the Mediterranean coast, the Anatolia news agency reported Saturday.

They mark the first major fighting in that area between security forces and rebels from the outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), who usually operate in the country's Kurdish-dominated southeast near the Iranian and Iraqi borders.

Seven PKK members were killed and a Turkish officer badly injured in the fighting in the first clash which took place on Friday near Serik, 30-kilometre east of Antalya, Antalya Governor Husnu Tuglu told the agency. A second clash erupted early Saturday near Manavgat, 30-kilometre east of Serik. The security forces killed another three PKK rebels, Anatolia said.

The Antalya area was visited by more than three million foreign tourists last year. The fighting reports came as a bomb exploded Friday in Istanbul injuring nine people, including three foreign tourists, near the Blue Mosque, one of the city's

## Turk PM says clash won't harm tourism

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said on Saturday the country's tourism industry would not be hurt by clashes between security forces and Kurdish rebels in the Mediterranean tourist province of Antalya, Anatolia News Agency quoted him as saying tourists would benefit from the military action.

"It will have good effects... because for a long time we had known they [rebels] were there. Now it is in large measure cleared up," he said.

Most clashes between security forces and the PKK have been in the mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey. Last summer a suspected PKK rebel was killed in a botched grenade attack in the western Turkish tourist resort of Bodrum, most popular tourist sites.

No one claimed responsibility for the bombing, but Turkish Interior Minister Murat Basoglu said the PKK "might be behind" the attack.

Two Indians, one New Zealander, four Turkish civilians and two Turkish soldiers were injured in the powerful blast, which took place in a park near the Blue Mosque. None were injured critically. It was not clear if the Istanbul bombing and the PKK's unusual presence in the Antalya area were linked.

The PKK has threatened to stage attacks on Turkey's holiday resorts if the Turkish military continues operations against the group.

The rebels have been fighting the Ankara government since 1984 for an independent Kurdish state in the southeast. More than 29,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan last weekend proposed a ceasefire but also threatening to step up attacks throughout the country if the government turned down his truce offer.

Turkish Defence Minister Ismet Sezgin rejected the proposal on Thursday, qualifying the offer as a tactic and saying the government would continue with anti-PKK military operations.

## Newspaper confiscated in Egypt over article

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt banned an international Arabic daily Saturday because of an article criticising the condition of minorities in the Arab World, its journalists said.

The article by Suleiman Neguib, an Egyptian Christian, ran Saturday in the London-based Al Hayat. It highlighted problems facing minorities in the Arab world, including Egypt's Christians, said the journalists, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Charges by Egyptian Christians living abroad of religious persecution in Egypt have angered the government. Christians, most of them belonging to the Coptic Orthodox Church, make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's predominantly Muslim population of 63 million.

The government has banned Al Hayat before for running articles deemed controversial.

In December, it was confiscated for publishing a statement that dealt with an interview with the leader of Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah, or the Islamic Group, which has fought the government since 1992.

## Iran earthquake leaves 11 dead, over 1,500 homeless

HASSAN-KOLANGI (AP) — Families and rescue workers sifted through rubble Saturday in search of survivors of an earthquake that killed 11 people, flattened a dozen villages and left over 1,500 homeless in this remote northeastern region.

Friday's magnitude-5.9 quake destroyed over 600 homes and shook dozens of villages in an area stretching 175 km from the cities of Birjand to Gonabad in Khorasan province. More than 10 people were injured, according to officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

By Saturday afternoon, authorities had ended emergency rescue work.

"We have officially stopped the search

for survivors because we believe there are no more casualties," said a government official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Shortly after the quake hit at 7:31 p.m. local time, relief workers, aided by the light of a full moon, pitched tents and distributed food, kerosene stoves and blankets to survivors. At night, temperatures drop to four degrees Celsius in the remote area which is dotted by poor villages and mud huts. The area has no access to telephones or electricity.

At the crack of dawn Saturday, some 100 aid workers picked at the rubble with shovels looking for signs of life, aided by rela-

tives of the missing who also tried to extract utensils and other belongings from the debris. Bulldozers removed piles of rubble and reopened many of the roads that had been blocked by fallen rocks.

The death toll was relatively low because the quake was preceded by a loud boom, giving many residents in this quake-prone region a chance to flee their homes, eyewitnesses said.

"There was a thunderous noise, like rocks exploding, and everyone ran out of their homes," said Mohammad Khajazi, a local grocer who has survived tremors before. "I was already outside when the earth started shaking."

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## JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

## PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — The Pink Panther  
16:20 Cartoon — Pumpkin Patch  
16:30 French Programmes  
18:00 — Skippy  
18:30 — Drama — The Borderline  
19:00 — Le Journal  
19:15 Documentary Magazine  
— Le Tour De France  
19:30 — News Headlines  
19:35 Life's Most Embarrassing Moments  
20:00 Documentary — The People and Places of Africa  
20:30 The Ultimate Guide to Motherhood  
21:10 — Drama — Renegade  
22:00 — News in English  
22:30 — Drama — Silent Witness  
23:59 Comedy — The Upper Hand  
00:30 — End of T.X.

## PRAYER TIMES

04:46 — Fajr  
06:07 — (Sunrise) Duha  
12:36 — Dhuhur  
16:12 — Asr  
19:06 — Maghreb  
20:27 — Isha

## CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel.  
4632785  
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590  
Terra Sancta Church Tel.  
4623666  
Anglican Church Tel.

## WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Hot weather conditions will prevail for the two coming days with temperatures rising above average by 7-10 degrees centigrade, and winds will be southeasterly light to moderate. In Aqaba it will be hot,

winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.  
Amman 17/32  
Aqaba 21/40  
Deserts 13/34  
Jordan Valley 19/37

Yesterday's high temperatures:  
Amman 30, Aqaba 38 Humidity readings: Amman 20 per cent, Aqaba 37 per cent.

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

## NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:  
Dr. Mazen Nballi 830435  
Dr. Faysal Dabbas 759155  
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 398140  
Dr. Fakhri Bilbeisi 552233  
Firas pharmacy 5661912  
Fendows pharmacy 778336  
Al Aserna pharmacy 4637055  
Nairokh pharmacy 4623672  
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730  
Yacoub pharmacy 4649455  
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660  
Najib pharmacy 847632

## IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr 276852  
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

## ZARQA:

Dr. Mazen Saffarini 985832  
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

## EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111  
Civil Defence Department 5661111  
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341  
Civil Defence Emergency 199  
Rescue Police 192-462111, 463777  
Fire Brigade 4617101  
Blood Bank 775121  
Highway Police 843402  
Traffic Police 896390  
Public Security Dept. 4630321  
Hotel Complaints 5608800  
Price Complaints 5661176  
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467  
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111  
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121  
Overseas Calls 010230  
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101  
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101  
Jordan Television 773111  
Radio Jordan 774111  
Water Authority 5680100  
J. Electricity Authority 815615  
Electric Power Co. 4636381  
RJ Flight Information 44-53200  
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

## HOSPITALS

AMMAN:  
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 9921199  
The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7  
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856

## IRBID:

Princess Haya Hospital 03314111

## FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

## ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
09:30 Jeddah (RJ)  
09:45 Larnaca (RJ)  
10:00 Bombay (RJ)  
10:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)  
10:25 Beirut (RJ)  
10:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
10:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)  
11:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
17:00 Brussels (RJ)  
17:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)  
18:00 Paris (RJ)  
18:50 London (RJ)  
19:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
19:10 Athens (RJ)  
19:20 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)  
20:40 Rome (RJ)  
20:55 Frankfurt (RJ)  
23:15 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)  
23:40 Paris (add) (RJ)  
02:20 Cairo (RJ)  
05:55 Vienna (add) (RJ)

## DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
05:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
06:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
06:30 Larnaca (RJ)  
06:45 Beirut (RJ)  
11:00 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)  
11:15 Frankfurt (RJ)  
12:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)  
12:30 Rome (RJ)  
13:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)  
13:20 Paris (add) (RJ)  
13:20 Athens (RJ)  
13:30 London (RJ)  
13:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)  
21:25 New Delhi (RJ)  
21:30 Vienna (add) (RJ)  
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

## Other Flights

Tel Aviv (GF)  
Sanza, Ta'iz (TY)  
Jeddah (SV)  
Moscow (SU)  
Abu Dhabi (GF)

## ARRIVALS

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700)

## DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
05:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
06:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
06:30 Larnaca (RJ)  
06:45 Beirut (RJ)  
11:00 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)  
11:15 Frankfurt (RJ)  
12:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)  
12:30 Rome (RJ)  
13:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)  
13:20 Paris (add) (RJ)  
13:20 Athens (RJ)  
13:30 London (RJ)  
13:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)  
21:25 New Delhi (RJ)  
21:30 Vienna (add) (RJ)  
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

## Other Flights

Tel Aviv (GF)  
Sanza, Ta'iz (TY)  
Jeddah (SV)  
Moscow (SU)  
Abu Dhabi (GF)

## ARRIVALS

22:30 Cairo (RJ)  
23:00 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta, Bangkok (RJ)  
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)  
01:00 Sanza (RJ)  
01:30 Damascus (RJ)  
03:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
05:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

## DEPARTURES

06:15 Beirut (ME)  
07:15 Tel Aviv (LA)  
07:30 Paris (AF)  
07:35 Damascus, London (BA)  
07:50 Frankfurt (LH)  
12:00 Al Hudaidah (TY)  
14:00 Jeddah (SV)  
14:10 Moscow (SU)  
14:25 Doha (GF)  
14:30 Doha (QR)  
21:10 Tel Aviv (LA)  
22:40 Cairo (MS)  
02:15 Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)

## Royal Wings (RW)

07:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)  
09:15 Aqaba (RW)  
10:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)  
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)  
18:55 Tel Aviv (RW)  
21:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)  
22:50 Aqaba (RW)

Home N  
Prince Moha  
condolences

Rights group un  
improve medica

NEWS I  
medicine conference  
last month

What's  
going  
on  
FILM  
Huma  
By Alia Shukr



# Home News

Jordan Times, Sunday, April 12, 1998

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## Prince Mohammad offers condolences to Naddeh family

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of His Majesty King Hussein, Saturday called at the house of the late Hanna Naddeh to offer his condolences to the family over the death of Naddeh and his son Suheil.

Dr. Naddeh, Suheil and a prominent psychiatrist were killed in the Shmeisani area on Wednesday by unidentified parties.

Also Saturday, HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid visited the Public Security Department (PSD), where he met with PSD Director General Nasouh Muhieddin to discuss the investigations into the killings of the Naddehs and psychiatrist Awmi George Sa'd. Prince Ra'd praised the efforts of PSD personnel to safeguard the security and safety of citizens, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Li Gen. Muhieddin briefed Prince Ra'd on the intensive efforts being made by the PSD to identify the killers and clarify the circumstances surrounding the murder.

The bodies of the victims were laid to rest on Friday. His Majesty King Hussein Thursday visited the PSD and urged Lt. Gen. Muhieddin to speed up the investigations into the murder.

Police sources said Naddeh and Sa'd were both killed by one bullet to the head, while Naddeh's son was shot twice. Police sources on Friday voiced hope that the perpetrators would be identified within 72 hours.

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Society for Human Rights (JSRH) Saturday issued a statement calling on the government to give due consideration to health matters and improve medical services, especially for the poor and those who are not covered by any health insurance plan.

The statement commended the endeavours of successive governments to set up health centres and hospitals in various parts of the country and spend millions of dinars on this sector, something which it said reflects the state's respect for the basic requirements of human rights.

But the statement, which was issued to mark World Health Day on April 7, raised a number of questions pertaining to the level of health and medical services.

More than one-third of the country's population are not covered by any form of medical insurance system and are unable to cover the cost of proper medical treatment, the JSRH statement noted.

It called on the government to speed up the formulation of a comprehensive health insurance system that would take care of the needs of the lower classes without discrimination.

There has been growing number of complaints about the shortage of medicine at health centres, especially in the most populous regions of Amman and Irbid, despite assurances by health officials to the contrary, according to the statement. It said that diabetic patients in particular continue to complain of the shortage of drugs or their increasing prices.

JSRH said government-run hospitals and health clinics are congested and do not allow sufficient time for health workers to interact with patients, while private hospitals charge exorbitant fees, making it impossible for the poor to receive any medical help.

The statement also drew attention to mistakes committed by doctors due to negligence and incompetence and called on the concerned authorities to revise the laws and regulations governing the profession to help avoid deaths resulting from malpractice.

JSRH urged the Ministry of Health to upgrade medical services at its hospitals and health centres and give special care to students, especially in such poor regions as the Jordan Valley.

## Government to discuss study on extended weekend for public sector employees

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government will soon discuss a study by the Ministry of Administrative Development on granting public sector employees an additional day off on the weekend, a government spokesperson said Saturday.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said the Council of Ministers will discuss the study on including Thursday as a weekly public holiday in addition to Friday for employees working in government and public institutions.

Dr. Ensour told reporters following the weekly Cabinet session that the Ministry of Administrative Development will soon finalise its study on the issue.

Preliminary results

showed that 76 per cent of Jordanians working in the public sector are in favour of a day off in addition to Friday.

The study stated that working hours would have to be increased by one hour per day to compensate for the additional weekend day. Currently, government departments close at two o'clock.

The study showed that 71 per cent of the employees surveyed favour Thursday as the extra day off.

Dr. Ensour said the plan has its "pluses and minuses."

"This subject has its pluses and minuses, but I believe that the Council of Ministers, for several reasons, is inclined to accept this proposal," Dr. Ensour said.

He added that the Cabinet

has not discussed the issue "but it is expected to debate and vote on it soon."

However, Minister of Administrative Development Bassam Emoush said he did not believe that it was a good idea to have a second day off.

Dr. Emoush said the study by his ministry was conducted upon a request by the Prime Ministry to determine the opinion of public sector employees on this issue.

"I think it is a negative proposal that does not suit our country," Dr. Emoush told the Jordan Times.

"It will create confusion in the public sector and cut the Kingdom's contact with the outside world for four days, because we would have Thursday and Friday off while they have Saturday and Sunday," the minister added.

It would have a negative impact on the economy and it would affect adversely the productivity of the employees in the country," Dr. Emoush said.

He said the majority of private sector employees surveyed said they favour the additional day in addition to the present weekly holiday.

Dr. Emoush said he did not think that the Council of Ministers would approve the proposal "because most of them do not favour it."

A senior banker said the government proposal would harm the activities of the commercial banks in the country because it would weaken their contacts with international banks and financial institutions.

"The new proposal, if approved, will reduce our

contacts with the stock markets abroad from four days to three days," banker Miflah Aqil said.

Mr. Aqil emphasised that world stock exchanges operate from Monday through Friday, a public holiday in the Kingdom, and are closed on Saturday and Sunday.

"If the government intends to approve this proposal, it should make one of the two days that follow Friday a public holiday rather than Thursday," Mr. Aqil said.

The banker said most employees and workers need two days off, which he said would give them more time to rest and would encourage domestic tourism.

"But it should be carefully studied before it is approved," added Mr. Aqil.

## UNHCR, ministry sign memorandum on refugee issues

AMMAN (Petra) — The representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan, Zobia Hassim-Ashagrie, and Minister of Interior and Natir Rashid Saturday signed a memorandum of understanding to supplement an agreement on bilateral cooperation that the two sides concluded in July 1997.

The memorandum paves the way for the two sides to work out a proper mechanism to deal with questions connected with refugees whose cases fall under UNHCR jurisdiction.

In preparation for the accord, Mr. Rashid had earlier ordered the creation of a new section at the Ministry of Interior to take charge of matters relating to the humanitarian needs of displaced persons.

In coordination with UNHCR and in conjunction with regional, international and local institutions, the section will follow up refugee cases with a view to repatriating or settling them.

The new section at the ministry will be charged with preparing periodical reports on refugees and displaced persons and human rights questions in Jordan.

In a statement issued Friday, Mrs. Hassim-Ashagrie commended the level of cooperation and coordination between the Jordanian government and UNHCR.

## First group of pilgrims returns to Jordan from Saudi Arabia after performing Hajj

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first group of Jordanian pilgrims who performed the Hajj (pilgrimage) in Saudi Arabia has returned safely to Amman, according to Abdul Fatah Salah, secretary general of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

Mr. Salah said the group returned on 81 buses and 35 automobiles via the Jordan-Saudi border post at Al Mudawara.

The ministry has despatched a special team to Al Mudawara to supervise

the pilgrims' return and to reimburse each for the JD25 paid earlier to the ministry as a fee against emergency services. No such services were required, according to Mr. Salah.

No Jordanian pilgrims were among those killed in a stampede on the final day of the Hajj that left 118 dead.

The victims, most of them elderly, were trampled or plunged to their deaths during the chaos Thursday in Mina, about five kilometres

from Mecca.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi said the accompanying medical team toured hospitals and determined that there were no Jordanian casualties among those killed or wounded in the stampede.

At least 200 people were injured in the incident, which happened after more than 700,000 pilgrims, crowded at the site of the "stoning of the devil" ritual, began to press forward and

caused the stampede.

Mr. Salah said the last of the Jordanian pilgrims travelling by land will return Sunday evening.

Mr. Salah said Arab Israeli Muslims have already arrived in Amman by land and have been housed at a special pilgrim camp in the Jordan Valley. They will cross the King Hussein Bridge into Palestine on Sunday, he added.

Arab Israeli pilgrims travelling by air are due in Amman on Sunday, he said.

## Jordanian-Tunisian committee to meet in Tunis this month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Joint Jordanian-Tunisian Higher Committee is due to meet in Tunis on April 21 under the chairmanship of the two countries' prime ministers, Abdul Salam Majali and Hamed Karoui, to review bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The higher committee meeting will be preceded by a preparatory committee meeting on April 19 grouping officials from the two sides. The delegations to this meeting

will be led by Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki and his Tunisian counterpart.

The agendas of the coming meetings include ways to promote economic and trade exchanges, involvement of the private sector in launching joint ventures, prospects of concluding an executive programme to this effect, and attracting foreign investments to Tunisia and Jordan.

The committee is also set to

discuss means of stimulating the work of the Jordanian-Tunisian business council, participation in trade fairs organised by the two countries, and cooperation in agriculture.

The two sides are expected to implement the executive programmes of an agreement on tourism cooperation signed in 1995, one on cultural and scientific cooperation from 1997-1999, and another on higher education covering

1997-1999.

The two sides will discuss cooperation in the fields of media, health, pharmaceutical industries, youth and sports, social development, the judiciary and care for the handicapped.

They are also expected to discuss prospects of expanding cooperation in public administration and training personnel for public service in implementation of an agreement signed in 1994.

## Jordanian-European programme launches quarterly newsletter

By Suha Ma'ayeh  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A joint Jordanian-European programme has launched its first project, a newsletter covering a series of workshops and training courses for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and voluntary societies helping the disabled.

The Jordanian-European

Information, Training and Technical Assistance for NGOs (JETT), in cooperation with the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), plans to publish the newsletter on a quarterly basis.

The training courses for the NGOs will be held at the Queen Zein Al Sharaf Complex to help establish cooperation among all NGOs work-

ing with the disabled to help improve their status and set up an information network to obtain all needed statistical data.

Previous workshops and projects, funded by the European Union (EU), have helped analyse the major problems of the disabled in Jordan "in order to implement necessary plans for developing and uplifting the

conditions of the disabled in all aspects," the newsletter said.

Around 600 Jordanian NGOs are working under the umbrella of the General Union of Voluntary Societies.

Their activities vary from social development and education to environment, youth, culture and health care to help for the disabled.

## what's going on

### FILM

\* "Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, on Monday, April 13, at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Works by Maurice Haddad at Hammurabi Arts Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until April 22.

\* Exhibition of works by Jordanian artists Ramin Rshaid, Abdul-Jah Tbaishat and Qasem Al Dwairi at the Royal Cultural Centre, until April 16.

\* Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.

## Human rights groups ask government to allow media coverage of Shbeilat trial

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Two international human rights organisations have sent separate letters to the government protesting its decision to ban press coverage of the ongoing trial of opposition leader Leith Shbeilat.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Human Rights Watch said the ban violated internationally recognised norms dealing with freedom of expression and urged Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to revoke the ban.

The trial of Mr. Shbeilat, a former member of Parliament and former president of the Jordanian Engineers Association, opened at the State Security Court on April 1 amid tight security.

The prosecutor has accused Mr. Shbeilat of inciting pro-Iraq riots in the southern town of Ma'an on Feb. 20, though initial charges of slandering His Majesty King Hussein have been dropped, his lawyers said.

Mr. Shbeilat was detained by police on his way back to Amman after delivering a

sermon at Ma'an's main mosque hours before the riots broke out. One Jordanian died and over 23 were injured in ensuing violence between police and demonstrators, forcing the government to impose a six-day ban on the desert town.

Mr. Shbeilat was blamed by the government for inciting the unrest.

The Press and Publications Department (PPD) sent letters to all Jordanian newspapers last month asking them not to publish any information relating to Mr. Shbeilat's case, a move that was condemned by his defence attorneys as well as journalists and editors.

The court also said any newspaper violating PPD orders will be subject to prosecution.

In its letter to Dr. Majali, the CPJ said the ban "was another disturbing infringement on the rights of journalists to report news and opinions freely" and violated the "most fundamental right of journalists to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights."

"The media blackout follows a disturbing pattern of government efforts to silence the press in Jordan," CPJ Chairman Gene Roberts was quoted as saying in the letter, a copy of which was sent to the Jordan Times.

"We urge the Jordanian government to end censorship and the criminal prosecution of journalists, which violate international press freedom standards."

Human Rights Watch, echoing CPJ views, said the ban on covering Mr. Shbeilat's court proceedings was not justified.

"Banning coverage of such a high-profile case, and prohibiting journalists from reporting news from the courtroom... can only be viewed as blatant state interference with the fundamental right of a free press to report the news, and the right of the public to obtain the news," wrote Hanny Megally, executive director of the Middle East division of the agency.

Human Rights Watch also criticised the ban on all public demonstrations that was enforced on Feb. 10 at the height of U.S.-Iraq tension

over access to Iraqi presidential sites by U.N. arms weapons inspectors.

It said the ban came "at a time when many Jordanians were deeply concerned about the prospect of a U.S.-led military strike on Iraq."

"The ban on peaceful demonstrations cannot be justified if its intent is to silence opposition voices and suppress freedom of expression."

The agency said it "was deeply concerned about the continuing pattern of restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression in Jordan" and urged the government to reverse "this

worrying trend."

The government has denied such charges, saying that it was acting within the boundaries of law and wanted to protect Jordan from possible acts of sabotage.

The two U.S. agencies expressed similar concern after the government introduced tough amendments to the Press and Publications Law in May 1997 while Parliament was in recess.

The High Court, in a surprise move, revoked the press restrictions earlier this year.

"We call on the Jordanian government to immediately rescind the ban on coverage of Leith Shbeilat's case and

to generate the internationally protected right of journalists to publish news and opinions freely and without reprisal," CPJ stated.

The trial is Mr. Shbeilat's third before the same court in six years.

In 1992, he was tried for treason and sentenced to

death, but the term was commuted to life imprisonment and he was immediately pardoned by King Hussein. Four years later he was tried for lese majeste at the State Security Court and was sentenced to three years imprisonment before he was released by the King.

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## Yeltsin carrot-and-stick approach may break deadlock with Duma

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin will have to offer parliament some carrots while brandishing the stick of early elections if he is to break the deadlock over his controversial nominee for prime minister, analysts said Saturday.

Mr. Yeltsin's protégé Sergei Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old technocrat, was defeated in the first round of voting Friday in the lower house state Duma, which rejected his candidacy by 186 votes to 143.

But the margin of defeat was narrower than expected, and Mr. Kiriyenko later said he was confident that "a consensus can be found," and that the Duma would not be dissolved.

If the Duma rejects the president's candidate for prime minister three times the head of state is entitled to dissolve the chamber and call early elections.

Mr. Yeltsin signalled that he would not back down over Mr. Kiriyenko, immediately resubmitting his candidacy after Friday's vote.

Mr. Yeltsin has firmly rejected the Communists' demand for a coalition

government, but analysts said there was still room for concessions, such as minor posts in the new government for representatives of various Duma factions.

According to the constitution, after the president's candidate fails to pass the first vote, a second vote must be held in the Duma within a week.

The Kremlin looked set for some tough bargaining with deputies in the coming days to get Mr. Kiriyenko confirmed, but it was encouraged by evidence of splits in the opposition ranks which enabled him to garner more votes than expected.

"Yeltsin will wield the big stick in one hand, and a carrot in the other — votes may be secured by offering government posts, but not top posts. Some may even go to the Communists," said Dmitry Trenin, a political analyst at the Carnegie Endowment think-tank.

The Communists and their leftwing allies have 221 seats in the 450-seat chamber.

"The Duma does not want new elections now, so the president will maintain

the threat of dissolving the chamber," Mr. Trenin said. Mr. Yeltsin, 67, made it clear in a radio address Friday that he was not prepared to let the political uncertainty hold up economic reforms for much longer.

Mr. Kiriyenko also stressed that the time had come for action rather than words, painting a grim picture of the economy.

Mr. Kiriyenko, a staunch market reformer and close ally of acting first deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov, has been Mr. Yeltsin's protégé since the president sacked Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and his government on March 23.

Yevgeny Volk, an analyst at the Heritage Foundation in Moscow, said Mr. Yeltsin "can sacrifice some secondary positions to Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultra-nationalists or to some other factions — they may get posts in the ministries of labour, education or health."

But Mr. Yeltsin's insistence on Mr. Kiriyenko "is a matter of principle now — he wants to emphasise his superior position in the

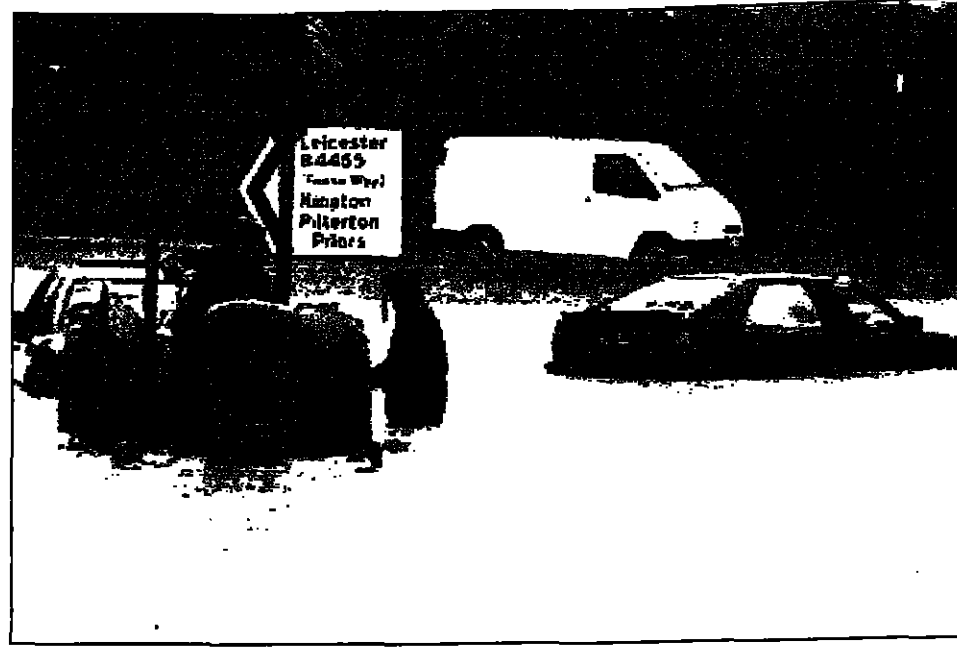
Russian political system," Mr. Volk said.

According to Mr. Trenin, Mr. Yeltsin "thinks Kiriyenko is the most convenient candidate. Kiriyenko will be fully under Yeltsin's control, without his own team or political base, and won't be able to compete with the president even a year from now."

Mr. Yeltsin's surprise dismissal of Mr. Chernomyrdin, who had served him loyally for five years, was triggered by a perception that the prime minister was usurping some of his powers, especially during his bouts of ill health, according to many analysts.

"For Yeltsin, the most important thing now is power, and he sacked Chernomyrdin because he saw him fulfilling many of the president's duties," Mr. Trenin said.

Despite Mr. Yeltsin's assurances that he will not seek a third term in the 2000 presidential elections, Kremlin officials have been vague on the issue, and a ruling is expected from the constitutional court later this year.



Drivers got stuck with their vehicles in Ettington, Warwickshire, Midlands, following heavy rain overnight which led to extensive flooding (AFP photo)

## Britain lashed by worst storms in half a century

LONDON (R) — Rescuers searched for two people feared drowned Saturday after Britain's worst floods in half a century turned the Easter weekend into a washout.

Heavy downpours left a trail of destruction across the country, with hundreds of homes evacuated and millions of pounds worth of damage reported.

In central England, a 14-year-old boy washed out of a milkman's van in Warwickshire and a woman who fell off a boat near Northampton were both listed as missing.

Flood alerts were in force

for parts of the midlands as rivers swelled and some towns were virtually cut off in Britain's worst floods for more than 50 years.

Two people were killed after rain and even snow lashed Britain Friday, the start of the long holiday weekend. Car organisations reported traffic chaos.

At Stratford-upon-Avon, home to Shakespeare and one of the country's top tourist resorts, the river burst its banks and the popular theatre was flooded.

Friday night's performance, called aptly enough "The Merchant of Venice", had to be cancelled while

Saturday's matinee show — this time of "The Tempest" — was also called off as the elegant swans that glide across the Avon held sway over the watery town centre.

In Leamington Spa, cinema staff watched in disbelief as water lapped over the front row of seats following a holiday showing of the hit movie "Titanic".

"It is our very own Titanic. We wept when we saw it," cinema manager Gary Stevens told the Daily Telegraph.

Forecasters said more wet weather was on its way.

## Latvia MPs ease rules for Russia minority

RIGA (R) — Latvian politicians, under the threat of Russian economic sanctions, have agreed new rules to allow the country's Russian-speakers to become citizens more easily, the Daina newspaper said Saturday.

Russia and Latvia have been at loggerheads in recent weeks, with Moscow accusing Riga of discriminating against its 700,000 Russian-speakers by applying tough rules on naturalisation.

The row intensified last week with Russia threatening to divert its oil shipments from its small neighbour.

Daina quoted member of parliament Andris Ameriks as saying that a working group of the top ruling parties had found a compromise to allow easier naturalisation of Russian speakers.

The newspaper quoted Mr. Ameriks as saying new rules would allow children who had reached the age of 16 to become citizens automatically if they could prove a knowledge of Latvian.

Children who were educated at schools where Latvian was the main language would not have to take a language test.

The new rules would also end a system which allows people to apply for naturalisation in a series of age groups, with the youngest first and oldest last.

This would open up the field to all without citizenship who were born in Latvia and Mr. Ameriks was quoted as saying that this was 47 per cent of all non-citizens.

The minorities row has rumbled on since the collapse of the former Soviet

Union in 1991 but became more serious last week with Russia tightening the economic screw with the oil threat.

Such a move would hurt the key Latvian oil transit sector, a major source of revenue.

Mr. Ameriks told Daina the proposals to ease the naturalisation rules would have to be finally approved by a meeting of government parties next week.

Latvia's naturalisation system has proved a marked failure, with very few Russian-speakers coming forward. However, most Western bodies dismiss allegations of outright discrimination.

The European Union (EU) has urged faster integration of the Russian minority for Latvia to qualify for eventual EU membership.

## Cambodia's King Sihanouk returns home from seclusion in China

SIEM REAP, Cambodia (AFP) — Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk returned home Saturday to end more than three months of seclusion in China, as his troubled country nears critical political and military crossroads.

A Royal Air Cambodge flight carrying the ageing monarch from Beijing touched down in this historic northern Cambodian town — home of the famed 12th-century Angkor Wat temple complex — a few minutes before sunset.

King Sihanouk, on his first trip home since pardoning his son Prince Norodom Ranariddh and setting in motion a Japanese-brokered peace plan for the fractured nation, was met by senior government officials.

Dressed in a dark suit, King Sihanouk waved to a small cluster of supporters gathered at the airport before descending on the tarmac where he was welcomed by the national assembly president, and acting head of state, Chea Sim.

Although not met by second Prime Minister Hun Sen, who ousted his son as co-premier some nine months ago, he was greeted by First Prime Minister Ung Huot.

The 75-year-old monarch's return home comes as Cambodia approaches scheduled elections in July, and government forces claim fresh victories in fighting Khmer Rouge guerrillas.

King Sihanouk, along with many observers, has been pessimistic about the July 26 polls meeting standards set by the international community, without which the vote is not likely to be supported or recognised.

The international community is demanding that Prince Ranariddh, whose royalist FUNCINPEC party won historic United Nations-brokered polls in 1993, be allowed to participate in elections if they are to be considered free and fair.

Some steps, including the king's granting of a pardon with government approval to the prince, thereby erasing two criminal convictions levelled by the government, have already been taken.

But many analysts here and abroad have warned that much more still needs to be done for the election to be credible.

Prince Ranariddh, who is now in Thailand after returning to Cambodia for a brief four-day respite from exile at the beginning of the month, is expected to travel here in the next two weeks to discuss the situation with his father.

## Neighbours warn against Kosovo sanctions

SANTORINI, Greece (R) — Greece, Bulgaria and Romania said Saturday that any sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia over the Kosovo crisis must not be allowed to damage the economies of neighbouring countries.

The foreign ministers of the three Balkan countries said after two days of talks on the Greek holiday island of Santorini that regional concerns must be taken into consideration by the international community if it acts against Belgrade.

"Any measures against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should take into account the political and economic stability of southeastern Europe and should not harm the interests of the states of the region," the ministers said.

At least 80 people were killed last month in Serbian police assaults on suspected strongholds of

ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo, which is a region of Serbia in rump Yugoslavia.

The big power Contact Group for Yugoslavia has given Belgrade until April 25 to reach a settlement with the ethnic Albanians or face renewed economic sanctions.

While countries in the region such as Bulgaria, Romania and Greece are concerned that violence may spill over the borders, they are also wary of the effect on their economies of trade sanctions.

"The losses which Bulgaria had during Bosnia-Herzegovina (sanctions) have been more than the servicing of the government debt for three years," Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nadezhda Mihailova told Reuters.

"The sanctions were more harmful for the neighbouring states (than

those they were aimed at)," she said.

Many regional experts believe that while sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia for its role in the Bosnia conflict hurt the country's citizens, they also allowed crime to thrive across the region.

All three ministers said that recent multilateral links among Balkan countries had given them more of a voice in international policy concerning the region.

"Cooperation... allows us to be involved in affairs that concern us," Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos said. Greece, the only European Union nation in the Balkans, has been pushing hard to take a leading role in the region — hosting a summit of Balkan leaders in Crete last year and encouraging a number of multilateral ministerial meetings.

Foreign ministers from the region are to meet in Istanbul in June and a second Balkan summit is to take place in Antalya, Turkey, later this year.

Mr. Pangalos said Friday that Greece would participate in talks with Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on creating a Balkan peacekeeping force.

The force would be used only for peacekeeping, not intervention, and would work under the auspices of NATO's partnership for peace programme, which links the alliance to former Communist countries.

NATO members Greece and Turkey have both claimed the idea of such a force as their own.

Greece did not attend a meeting in March on the issue that was held in Ankara.

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## Croatia to request extradition of camp commander

ZAGREB (AFP) — Croatia will ask Argentina to extradite former World War II concentration camp commander Dinko Sakic, after Buenos Aires issued an arrest warrant this week, the Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic has said.

"Croatia is going to ask for the extradition of Dinko Sakic. Croatia is a lawful state which can bravely face up to the (period of) the NDH and Jasenovac, and assure a fair trial," Foreign Minister Mate Granic told the Slobodna Dalmacija daily.

The NDH was Croatia's short-lived fascist state allied to the German Nazis during World War II which oversaw the detention and murder of tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, gypsies and others in concentration camps such as the one at Jasenovac, 90 kilo-

metres southeast of Zagreb.

Mr. Sakic, 76, has continued to elude a detention order issued Tuesday after he admitted on Argentine television Monday that he headed the Jasenovac camp in the former Yugoslavia.

Despite his admission, Mr. Sakic, who obtained Argentine nationality and lived quietly in Argentina for 51 years, denied that any killings occurred at the Jasenovac camp under his watch.

While the Simon Wiesenthal centre in Jerusalem said this week that Mr. Sakic was a murderous leader, responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews, gypsies, Serbs, and foes of the pro-Nazi government then ruling Croatia.

The ex-captain told the television programme that he considered himself "a

Croatian patriot," Mr. Sakic's wife said he travelled to Buenos Aires late Tuesday to ask for help from the Croatian embassy, which denied having had any contact with the ex-soldier.

Argentine President Carlos Menem said Thursday, before Croatia said it would demand Mr. Sakic's extradition, that he could be sent to Israel.

"He may be sought by that country because his victims were Jews," Mr. Menem said of Mr. Sakic.

Mr. Menem also indicated Croatian authorities could request Mr. Sakic's extradition. Justice Minister Raul Granillo Ocampo said Wednesday that "if some country asks for his extradition, I don't think it will be denied."

A book put on sale in Zagreb this week recalls the horrors prisoners faced

at the camp.

Marked now by a monumental concrete rose clearly visible from the nearby road, the transit, labour and death camps at Jasenovac, southeast of Zagreb, were founded in 1941.

Serbs, Jews, gypsies, Muslims and Croat oppositionists were among those imprisoned there and estimates as to the numbers killed vary widely.

The Simon Wiesenthal institute says 800,000 perished although Jewish sources here say the total figure could be between 80,000 to 90,000 with the largest group being Serbs.

Entitled "Zna li se?" (Do we know?), the book, including gruesome pictures of corpses from the camp, was produced by the Jewish community in Zagreb to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the 1939-45 war.

## Karadzic will never surrender, wife declares

BELGRADE (AFP) — The wife of Radovan Karadzic, Bosnia's most-wanted war crimes suspect, said Saturday he would never surrender to trial.

"Rumours that Radovan Karadzic ... is ready to turn himself in to The Hague tribunal are false," Ljiljana Zelenc-Karadzic told the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA, monitored in Belgrade.

"He will never turn him-

self in voluntarily, and he will resist any eventual attempt to arrest him, capture him or illegally detain him," she said.

It was the most direct statement yet from Mr. Karadzic's inner circle that he has no intention of surrendering to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which is based in The Hague.

Western sources had said earlier this week that

Mr. Karadzic had vacated his power base of Pale, near Sarajevo, and hired two U.S. lawyers with a view to possibly going to The Hague "spontaneously."

Mr. Karadzic, a hardline nationalist who led the Bosnian Serbs during the 1992-95 war, is wanted by the ICTY together with his army commander General Ratko Mladic for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

## Witness claims suggest paparazzi not to blame for Diana crash

PARIS (AFP) — Evidence from a motorcyclist claiming to have been first on the scene of the crash in which Diana Princess of Wales was killed last Aug. 31, appears to clear the paparazzi of blame, a French newspaper report said Saturday.

Eric Petel, 25, told magistrate Hervé Stephan on Feb. 2 that he was "first to arrive" at the crash scene, before the press photographers who were subsequently charged in connection with the accident.

Mr. Petel said he had raised the alarm and alerted the police but that the police refused to believe him. In

February, investigators expressed "deep reservations" about Mr. Petel's evidence.

However, according to La Voix du Nord newspaper Saturday, Mr. Petel's lawyer Antoine Deguignes "once again explained" the facts to Mr. Stephan who "recently received confirmation of the statement" made by Mr. Petel whose evidence was not judged to be "plausible".

"He did call the 17 (the telephone number for French police) he did go to the Avenue Mozart police station before being taken to the Quai des Orfèvres (central police headquarters),

And thus, all the initial theories come tumbling down," the northern French regional paper said.

The paper said Mr. Petel was a "witness whom higher diplomatic interests attempted to sideline because his version of what happened suited nobody".

According to Mr. Petel, he was overtaken by the princess's Mercedes on Aug. 31, while travelling on his motorbike at a speed of "between 120 and 130 kilometres an hour" along the expressway beside the river Seine in Paris.

When the accident happened "a second later" in the underpass, Mr. Petel

was "alone. No paparazzi, no Fiat Uno, no witness" and 30 seconds later, "he held the dying (Diana) in his arms and was still alone", before setting off to seek help, the Voix du Nord report said.

Investigators have suggested that the Mercedes hit a mysterious Fiat Uno car before ramming into a pillar of the underpass.

Princess Diana died shortly after the crash. Her Egyptian-born companion Dodi Fayed was killed outright as was the driver Henri Paul. Only bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones survived the crash, but was badly injured.

## Challenged Paris mayor insists he will not resign

PARIS (AFP) — Corruption-tainted Paris mayor Jean Tiberi said Saturday that he would resist efforts by dissident right-wingers and the socialists to unseat him from his position.

"Under no circumstances will I resign," Mr. Tiberi told the Europe Un radio station, adding that he didn't envisage early elections to resolve the current crisis.

Right-wingers who con-

trol the Paris assembly are locked in a succession battle after Mr. Tiberi was challenged for the leadership by former Minister Jacques Toubon.

He launched a "palace coup" against Mr. Tiberi Monday by drawing a third of his supporters into a new conservative group, PARIS, an acronym for Paris, Audacity, Renewal, Initiative, Solidarity.

"I was elected mayor of Paris and I will remain the

mayor of Paris until 2001," Mr. Tiberi said defiantly, referring to the year his mandate is due to end.

"I will never accept that Jacques Toubon will be mayor of Paris," he said after again denouncing what he called Toubon's "putsch" against him.

As the right-wingers indulge in internecine warfare, the socialists in the city assembly have taken advantage of the

split to demand Mr. Tiberi's resignation.

Despite the splits and defections to either camp among right-wingers, neither of the two now has a working majority, leaving the socialists as the biggest group on the town council but without a commanding lead.

Mr. Tiberi is proposing new talks for a "reconciliation" after Easter. In the meantime, business has ground to a halt.

Hindu nationalists call for debate on shelved radical policies

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Hindu nationalist group Saturday called for a debate on the government's policy of non-interference in the economy.

Mr. Advani, the president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said the government's policy of non-interference in the economy was "not constructive" and "dialogue on

the nationalised economy" was needed.

The BJP plans to hold a debate on the issue in the coming months, Mr. Advani said.

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## Hindu nationalists call for debate on shelved radical policies

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A top Hindu nationalist leader Saturday called for a "constructive debate" on his rightwing party's most radical policies which were frozen to cobble together a coalition government.

Lal Krishna Advani, home minister and the outgoing president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), said "the right approach is to continue peaceful, non-confrontationalist and constructive debate and dialogue on them."

The nationalist-led coalition government, backed by 16 regional partners, scraped through a confidence vote last month with a wafer-thin majority.

The BJP plans included building a temple on the site of a mosque destroyed by Hindu fanatics at Ayodhya six years ago and the drafting of uniform civil laws concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance.

These were bitterly opposed by Muslims, who make up 125 million of India's population of 960 million.

The nationalists had also called for the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir to be more closely integrated into India. The territory has sparked two wars between India and Pakistan during the past 50 years.

"The Ayodhya issue should be taken out of both the judicial and the legislative spheres and confined only to exploring a peaceful solution through concerted dialogue," Mr. Advani said.

He said the radical policies were left out in the coalition government's national agenda as they would have made "coalition governance difficult."

"Large area of governance has little to do with ideology, except the overriding principle of national interests."

"Indeed, good governance in most spheres of national life becomes possible only when it is deideologised and depoliticised," Mr. Advani told a meeting here of the BJP's senior members.

The BJP, which champions a philosophy of "one nation, one people, one culture", is accused of planning to replace the secular constitution with a Hindu theocracy.

Mr. Advani said there was a need for a "new BJP" to "shoulder the responsibilities of the new era that is opening up for both India and our own party."

The new BJP will be guided not by the issues of yesterday but by the agenda of tomorrow.

The BJP emerged as the largest bloc in parliament following the February-March elections with 179 seats but analysts predict the coalition government led by it would not last more than 18 months.



Police outside Seoul's Myongdong Cathedral check the ID of students after 10 radical members of the outlawed Hanchongnyon (Federation of Student Councils) launched a hunger strike to back demands that the organisation be allowed to stage a three-day rally and elect new office bearers (AFP photo)

## S. Korean police and students in standoff after arrests

SEOUL (AFP) — Thousands of riot police, heavily outnumbered by radical students at two universities in southern Taegu city, threatened to storm the campuses Saturday if an election was held for officers of the outlawed student federation, reports and student sources said.

Some 8,000 riot police faced off against around 300 students holed up inside Yeungnam University and other 1,000 in the city's Kyongbuk campus.

Students, speaking by phone, said some 200 of the Kyongbuk students had tried to push their way by hand-to-hand fighting through the police cordon off campus mid-afternoon, but failed.

There was conspicuous restraint on both sides, reports said, with the radical students forsaking their trademark firebombs and rocks, and no sign of tear gas on the part of police.

The stand-off followed the arrest overnight of six students and the brief detention of 87 others who had pelted the police with stones, Yonhap

News Agency said.

The radicals, members of the outlawed Hanchongnyon (Federation of University Councils), branded pro-North Korea by Seoul, called on the police to allow them to "peacefully" hold an on-campus election of new office bearers.

But the police said they would storm the campus if the election went ahead.

In Seoul meanwhile 10 Hanchongnyon members launched a hunger strike in the grounds of the city's Myongdong Cathedral. The 10 vowed not to eat until Wednesday, the deadline the students are asking to hold their elections.

The federation is branded "pro-North Korea" by Seoul because it defines the South Korean government as "the puppet government of the U.S. imperialists."

Police had drawn up the massive cordon around the campus, railway stations and bus terminals to prevent the planned three-day rally and elections from Friday through Sunday.

The impasse coincided with the opening of crucial talks between the two warring Koreas in Beijing Saturday afternoon to discuss fertiliser aid and other issues.

The talks are the first direct inter-Korean government dialogue since contacts were scuttled four years ago by the sudden death of former North Korean President Kim Il-Sung.

Through its official broadcasts, Pyongyang has praised Hanchongnyon as true patriots, supporting efforts by its members to rebuild their battered organisation.

In the past two years, scores of radical leaders have been hunted down and arrested. The government claimed that 191 out of 206 universities had kicked the group off their campuses.

The continuation of the crackdown by Kim Dae-Jung, a former dissident who took office in February, was anticipated when jailed Hanchongnyon members were excluded from a recent amnesty for political prisoners.

## No pressure to resolve Indonesians' claim for asylum

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — The Malaysian government has not brought pressure to bear on the United States to find a quick solution to the issue of eight Indonesians who stormed their embassy to seek refugee status, an official said Saturday.

"There is no pressure from the Malaysian government to resolve it. We don't want to resolve the issue quickly," a U.S. embassy spokesman told AFP.

He said U.S. Ambassador John Malot had met senior Malaysian foreign ministry officials early Saturday to discuss the matter.

"There is no deadline set to end the issue," he added. A group of 35 Indonesians broke into the U.S. embassy and three other diplomatic compounds in a desperate bid for political asylum.

Most of the frail, poorly-dressed immigrants from Indonesia's troubled Aceh province put up no resistance when all but eight were swiftly rounded up and handed over to Malaysian security forces.

The immigrants who entered the French, Swiss and Brunei's Sharif Ali Palace were denied

asylum and police were called in to evict them. Only those in the U.S. embassy were allowed to stay.

The U.S. official also said that they have highlighted to the Malaysian government the need to allow the U.N. agency on refugees to visit the detention camps to ascertain those who are seeking refugee status.

"We pointed it out to the Malaysian side in a friendly way," he said.

The U.S. official said it was a standard practice for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to conduct interviews of the Indonesians who seek protection.

"We are in touch with the UNHCR. They are cooperative. There is consultation (about the eight). Certainly, there is no indication of them stepping back and washing their hands" of the problem, he said.

Fourteen illegal Indonesians have also been holed up at the UNHCR office since March 30, when they crashed a truck through the compound gates. Their requests for asylum are being looked into.

U.N. refugee officials who

have voiced concern about illegal Indonesian migrants to be deported, Friday said it was up to the United States to decide the fate of the illegals who stormed the embassy to seek asylum.

Malaysia, which has deported thousands of illegal immigrants has been criticised by human rights groups for not discriminating between economic and political migrants.

The spokesman also said the embassy was not ready to turn over the illegals to the police or the Malaysian government. "This is a serious issue."

The UNHCR official had said the Indonesians argued they are involved in political activities in Aceh and could be in danger if they return home.

Indonesian military officials have denied that Aceh immigrants face reprisals if they return to their home province, where a separatist insurgency has rumbled on since the mid-1970s.

But Indonesian sources and officials said the military was detaining hundreds of repatriated illegal immigrants for questioning over possible links to the outlawed Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh) group.

## Seoul dangles aid to Pyongyang, but at a price

BEIJING (R) — The first high-level talks between rival North and South Korea in four years started Saturday with Seoul demanding concessions on the emotional issue of family reunions as the price for help to famine-stricken Pyongyang.

Pyongyang called for the talks to discuss fertiliser shipments desperately needed during spring crop planting.

South Korea's chief delegate offered to go much further, dangling the prospect of a broad package of aid and investment to rescue millions of North Koreans from starvation and revive Pyongyang's crippled economy.

But he made clear that assistance would depend on steps by the North towards peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, divided since the 1950-53 Korean war.

In particular, the South was seeking progress on reuniting millions of Koreans separated from their relatives by an armed truce that ended the conflict.

The North's delegation turned up one hour late for the talks in a plush Beijing hotel, the first high-level bilateral contact since the death of North Korean "great leader" Kim Il-Sung in 1994.

Delegates emerged after two hours and Seoul's leading negotiator, the vice minister for national unification, said the two sides agreed to meet again Sunday.

"The talks went ahead in an open-minded manner and it is very significant to have met after three years and nine months," Jeong Se-Hyun said.

The North Korean delegation, led by Jon Kum-Chol, also a vice minister, made no comment to the media.

Mr. Jeong declined to give details of the North's negotiating position.

But a South Korean official said earlier that the North had agreed to go beyond discussions on fertiliser aid and talk about family reunions.

"Both sides agreed that the issue of reuniting separated families should be a key item on which to seek a breakthrough," the South Korean official told reporters.

North Korea's farmland is exhausted by a combination of disastrous agricultural policies and three consecutive years of floods and drought.

The country is surviving largely on international food handouts. South Korea is the North's best hope for large-scale aid and investment.

Mr. Jeong said he made clear the South Korean public would not agree to help the North while their own economy was in trouble unless Pyongyang offered political concessions.

"In regards to the fertiliser request, I reminded the North Koreans that even South Korea and the government are facing many

difficulties because of the economic crisis," he said. "Considering the size of the North Korean request, one of the most important things is to get the approval of the South Korean people," he said.

"We expect reciprocity from the North Korean side."

A statement read by Mr. Jeong during the talks, and made available in English, promised fertiliser, further food aid and supplies of seeds, pesticides and equipment "for a fundamental solution to your food shortage problem."

It said Seoul would honour its promise to help finance light-water nuclear reactors for the North. And it offered "large-scale investments in your territory."

In return, South Korea expected efforts towards reunifying the divided country.

"The separated family problem caused by our division is an urgent issue and the solution cannot be delayed any longer. Old family members are passing away one after another, leaving their half-century-old grief unrelieved," the statement said.

It proposed a family meeting and mail exchange centre in the border truce village of Panmunjom and permission by North Korea for hometown visits from the South.

Seoul also called for an exchange of envoys and the reopening of liaison offices in Panmunjom that were abandoned by the North in 1996.

The previous high-level meeting between the two Koreas discussed arrangements for a presidential summit, but the death of Kim Il-Sung ended the initiative and relations later plunged.

## 'Cannibalism, food theft in N. Korea'

BEIJING (AFP) — Incidents of cannibalism are being reported from famine-stricken North Korea as those struggling to survive were denied international food aid, aid agency Medicins Sans Frontières (MSF) said Saturday.

Much international aid was going to officials and the army, it said, quoting witnesses and other sources in a report on the North Korean situation.

Marcel Roux, China chief for MSF, said the group interviewed people on the Chinese side of the border with North Korea, who said almost nothing was reaching those dying of disease and starvation.

Mr. Roux said sources for the report included North Korean refugees, the most recent of whom fled the country in December, the Korean minority living on the Chinese side of the border who had set up networks to help families left behind, and ethnic Chinese who had been to North Korea on business or had spoken to contacts there.

An unidentified 23-year-old from Buk Cheng village was quoted in the MSF report as saying: "Our neighbours ate their own daughter in order not to die of hunger. It is true. I saw it with my own eyes."

An 18-year-old orphan said: "Our cousin killed, salted and ate an orphan whom no one cared about."

A Chinese Korean from Zhongjiang said that in one village a woman ate her two-year-old son so she would not die of starvation.

Most North Koreans interviewed said the

state stopped issuing food rations three years ago, and in some areas rations stopped five years ago.

A teacher in the Chinese border town of Tumen was quoted as saying international aid agencies were being deceived by the North Korean government.

"My cousin said a year ago grain was distributed, but they were ordered not to touch it," the teacher said.

"Foreigners came to check that the grain had been distributed to the population. After the foreigners had left the government collected the sacks and never mentioned the aid again."

The MSF report said refugees spoke of bodies lying on roadsides, people dying in railway stations and army trucks being driven around at night to collect corpses.

A man from Hyesan, who said his five-year-old son had died of starvation, said his family had received one kilogramme of rice last June.

"Most of the aid goes to army and government cadres but never to the people," he said.

A report released earlier this month by the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations estimated that at least one million North Koreans died of hunger from 1996-97.

The North said last month its food-grain coffers were empty, and the U.N. World Food Programme has appealed for 657,972 tonnes of food aid to assist 7.47 million North Koreans, almost a third of the total population.

## U.S. protecting doctor who killed drug lord

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A Mexican doctor who participated in a plastic surgery operation that accidentally killed the head of the Ciudad Juarez drug cartel in 1997, is living in the United States under government protection, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

Pedro Rincon was one of five doctors who attempted to carry out major plastic surgery on drug lord Amado Carrillo Fuentes, at the time the most powerful and feared drug smuggler in Mexico.

The operation went wrong and Carrillo Fuentes died on the operating table on July 3, 1997.

Weeks later, the bodies of two of the five doctors who participated in the operation were found tortured and stuffed into concrete-filled steel barrels.

Fearing he would also be tortured and killed, Dr. Rincon went to the Mexican police.

"The Mexican government, not wanting more controversy, offered to turn him over to U.S. intelligence officials, the offer was accepted, and Pedro Rincon and his family were clandestinely taken to the United States last November aboard a U.S. government jet," the Post reported.

U.S. officials, in part based on Dr. Rincon's statements, say that Carrillo died due to "medical failures". Mexican officials however say that Carrillo Fuentes' death was part of a plot by rival drug gangs, or by rivals within his organisation.

## Thai resort town sets up centre to fight foreign mafia

BANGKOK (AFP) — Officials in Thailand's coastal resort city of Pattaya will set up a police centre to combat the growing activities of foreign organised crime syndicates, a report said Saturday.

Pattaya officials said the centre would coordinate all concerned agencies in the fight against mafia-style groups believed to be operating there, the Nation daily reported.

City mayor Paiton Subthithamongsawat said the city was willing to open its coffers to support the centre, but was opposed the deployment of police commandos, which he felt would ruin the resort area's tourist charm.

The move follows the speedy trial and conviction Thursday of a young Russian gunman for the

murder of a Pattaya bar owner. A court in Chon Buri province southeast of Bangkok sentenced 29-year-old Harro Kerz, an Estonian, to life imprisonment.

The case aroused police fears that Russian organised crime gangs are gaining a foothold in the city, famed for its commercial sex industry.

Mr. Kerz was arrested last Saturday at Bangkok's international airport. He was convicted of killing Russian pub owner Konstantin Povoloski on March 31 in Pattaya, 150 kilometres southeast of the capital.

The Nation daily Thursday reported Thai police were tracing links between the gang-style slaying and Russian crime syndicates believed to be operating in Thailand.

An earlier report in the

Bangkok Post quoted police as saying another Russian man, on wanted lists in many countries, was suspected of masterminding the murder, but had fled the country. Investigators have said the murder was likely just the tip of the iceberg of Russian mafia activity, thought to include rackets such as extortion, executions, drugs and prostitution.

Police said the gang-style execution of the Pattaya pub owner followed similar reports that Russian gangs were demanding protection money from Russian nationals with businesses in the tourist city. More Russians visit Pattaya than any other foreign nationality, with more than 20,000 arriving so far this year, the report added.

## George Michael says he's gay

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — British pop icon George Michael came out and openly stated that he was gay in an exclusive interview on CNN that aired late Friday.

The interview follows the singer's arrest here for "engaging in a lewd act" in a Beverly Hills park late Tuesday. This is the first time that Michael, 34, talked to reporters about the incident.

"I want to say that I have no problem with people knowing that I'm in a relationship with a man right now," George Michael told Cable News Network. "I have not been in a relationship with a woman for almost 10 years."

Michael said he was ready to acknowledge that he was gay "because I've already kind of

done that — haven't I? I've done that in a way I didn't really intend to."

The 34-year-old singer was alone when an undercover officer allegedly saw him commit an unspecified act and arrested him. Beverly Hills police said.

Police refused to specify the nature of the act, declining to confirm whether Michael had exposed himself or was masturbating when he was arrested at the park that is reputedly a gay cruising area.

Michael posted \$500 in bail and was released late Tuesday. He is scheduled to appear in Beverly Hills Municipal Court on May 5 for his arraignment.

Michael admitted that he put himself "in an extremely stupid and vulnerable position."

"I don't feel any shame. I feel

stupid and I feel reckless and weak for having allowed my sexuality to be exposed this way," he told CNN.

Michael also admitted that he had committed similar "reckless" acts in the past.

The singer apologised to his fans for the incident, and reassured them that all was well. "I just want to let them know that I'm okay," he said.

Michael also told his fans that his early love songs were written about women, but that his more recent ones were about men.

The pop star is famous for such hits as "I Want Your Sex" and "Faith" and was one of Princess Diana's favourite singers. He attended her funeral in September and was one of three producers of a tribute to her.

## Former Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach dies

HANOI (AFP) — Nguyen Co Thach, the former Vietnamese foreign minister and master diplomat who died at the age of 75, a Vietnamese diplomatic source said Saturday.

Thach, who had recently suffered heart problems, died Friday in Hanoi Military Hospital from cardiac complications, the source said.

Thach, who was born on March 15, 1923, was a strong-willed and urbane diplomat who ran Vietnam's foreign policy during Hanoi's years in the wilderness after the invasion of Cambodia in 1979.

"He was thoughtful but he

knew where the lines were drawn in what he wanted to communicate," said one Western diplomat who observed Thach last July during a three-day conference orchestrated by former U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara.

Thach was a member of the all-powerful Communist Party politburo until 1991, when he was ousted from the government and stripped of his party posts — apparently to appease China.

Despite his sacrificial ouster, Thach maintained close ties with the Vietnamese elite, and had close links to

senior officials from many countries abroad.

Le Dong Doan, a senior Vietnamese economist and close friend of Thach's, told AFP that Thach was "highly respected as a politician with a vision and a very skillful diplomat."

"He has got a lot of friends all over the world," he added. Before joining the foreign service in 1954, Thach served as a colonel and assistant to General Vo Nguyen Giap, the mastermind of the victory at Dien Bien Phu that ended French rule in Vietnam.

He was appointed consul general in New Delhi in 1956

and spent his years there polishing his suave manners and mastery of languages that set him aside from the dull apparition in the foreign ministry.

In 1968 he was appointed vice foreign minister and came to the world's attention when along with his mentor Le Duc Tho and former Foreign Minister Xuan Thuy, he took part in secret negotiations ending U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war.

Thach is survived by his wife Pham Thi Phuc, who formerly worked for UNESCO. His funeral is to be held in Hanoi on April 16.



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## Promise in Irish peace

THE BREAKTHROUGH reached Friday on British-ruled Northern Ireland has been rightly hailed by the international community as the dawn of a new era of cooperation in a land torn by national and religious animosities since 1969. Although the historic agreement was reached by political leaders, the time for the peoples concerned to pronounce themselves on it has yet to come. As British Prime Minister Tony Blair commented in the wake of the accord, "this will not work unless in your will and in your mind you make it work." We might add that any such broad agreement needs also the full support of the peoples since national and religious feelings are often driven by emotions and sentiments rather than by reason.

It is well-known that the fighting that went on in Northern Ireland took a heavy toll on its people from both sides was motivated by emotionally charged perspectives on the future of that troubled land. The IRA-allied Sinn Fein Party struggled for many years to unite the two sides of Ireland. The Protestants, on the other hand, fought to preserve the status quo essentially by keeping their association with London. How to overcome the innermost feelings and attitudes held so strongly by the two parties is the real challenge that lies ahead.

In any way, the deal itself has many loopholes to be filled in the months and years ahead. Ending the 26-year "direct rule" from London would not be easy. The first hurdle to pass is the approval of the accord by the two sides of Ireland in referenda to be held in the next month. But this part of the agreement is no doubt a positive feature as the consent of the people offers the most effective and fair way to gauge public support for it. There is another major obstacle to be overcome and that is the election of a so-called "Belfast assembly" whose exact mandate and authority have yet to be decided. A third thorny issue is the envisioned North-South Council which has to be duly elected in the future and whose terms of reference must also be agreed upon in due course. Then comes the necessary constitutional amendments in both Dublin and London to accommodate the new deal.

While these are formidable tasks indeed, the fact that the agreement was brokered by the U.S. and has already won the approval of the British and Irish governments augurs well for its future.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Samir Qamari focused on Iraq where the U.N. arms inspection teams have searched presidential sites and found no weapons of mass destruction. He said the Arab Nation which stood in horror watching the U.S. massing its armada to unleash destruction and death on Iraq should take the initiative and end the sanctions on the Arab country which has implemented all U.N. resolutions and displayed full cooperation with the U.N. weapons inspectors. The Arab Nation must have realised by now that the U.S. and British forces were massed in the Gulf not for the defence of the Arab states neighbouring Iraq but rather to secure Western interests and maintain hegemony over the Arab World and its wealth, said the writer. The time has come for the Arabs to rise against injustice and stand firm in the face of the U.S. hostile campaign directed against Iraq and its people and must take steps to prevent their region from facing another round of devastating war, he demanded. The writer said the Arab masses should put an end to the ambitious desires of the forces which harbour enmity towards the nation.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Saleh Qallab expressed the view that Dennis Ross, the U.S. Middle East envoy who plans yet another visit to the Middle East soon, is not expected to achieve anything given the present Israeli position with regard to the peace process. The writer said, in his last visit Ross did not reveal the American-sponsored plan for the Israeli redeployment in the Palestinian territories because of Israel's intransigence, but Israel's stand has not changed, and Ross is not expected to do anything to change the Israeli position. It is regrettable to see the U.S. administration failing to live up to its promises and failing to protect its own interests in the region which are exposed to grave danger as a result of its continued backing of Netanyahu and his policies, said the writer. If Ross is coming this time to exert pressure on the Palestinians instead of the Israelis, then his mission is doomed, because the Palestinians have nothing left to cede and are waiting for the agreements to be implemented, noted the writer. He said even if the Palestinian leadership succumbed to the U.S. desires, any agreement under duress is bound to serve as a time bomb that would go off at any moment.

## Sunday's Economic Pulse

## Wadi Araba treaty is not Camp David

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

IN ITS popular programme, dubbed the Fourth Dimension and broadcast live from the satellite television station of Abu Dhabi, Arab national security was the subject of discussion on Wednesday April 1, 1998.

I was invited to participate in the programme via satellite from Amman. In the studio were Dr. Shafiq Ghabra from Kuwait and Dr. Mustafa Alawi Seif from Egypt. The seasoned moderator was Jamal Rayyan.

One of the most sensitive subjects that Mr. Rayyan referred to me was the claim by a call-in viewer that Arab national security was shattered by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed at Camp David in 1987 as well as by the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty signed in Wadi Araba in 1994.

I rejected the notion that the two treaties could be lumped together in one basket and treated equally as far as Arab national security is concerned. They are not similar. They differ sharply in regard to circumstances that led to their conclusions, and in the results and consequences of each. Simply Camp David was a bad deal, and Wadi Araba was a good deal.

There was of course nothing wrong in President Anwar Sadat recovering Sinai from Israeli occupation, or for that matter, in reaching a peaceful solution with Israel. The problem was that Egypt did what it did by breaking away from a then Arab consensus not to make peace with Israel

on an individual basis. Egypt withdrew from the Arab-Israeli dispute and in so doing crippled whatever Arab might there was.

Jordan, by contrast, entered the peace process by going to Madrid in an atmosphere of Arab consensus, at the Arab summit level, to seek land-for-peace formula. Peace, the Arab summit decided, was an Arab strategic option.

More importantly, the Camp David treaty may have solved the Egyptian part of the problem, but it did not solve the central issue, namely the rights of the Palestinian people, for which Arab leaders accepted responsibility.

The Wadi Araba treaty, by contrast, was not signed except after the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), officially designated as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, reached its own peace with Israel, and formally recognised Israel's right to exist.

No one, therefore, can accuse Jordan of by-passing the central Palestinian issue in 1994 as Egypt had in 1978.

One last difference between Camp David and Wadi Araba stands out. The first came about after Arab armies made a great breakthrough in 1973 war.

Arab national security was then at its best. The Wadi Araba treaty came about as a result of total collapse of Arab national security, when our back was dealt a devast-

tating blow during the first American-Arab war, sometimes called the second Gulf war, or Desert Storm. At the time, the United States was able to settle accounts with the greatest Arab force, using Syrian and Egyptian cover. The war left Jordan exposed to all sorts of risks involving its very existence.

Camp David produced weakness in Arab national security, while Wadi Araba by contrast was the product of the weakness of Arab national security.

The Jordanian leadership, with an historical vision grabbed the opportunity and acted at exactly the right moment to restore Jordan's rights in land, water, and security. His Majesty King Hussein made the best of the worst of circumstances.

Subsequent events, such as the take over of the government in Israel by the extreme right, reduced the benefits of peace, but no one who cares about Jordan would like Jordan to have failed to finalise its own deal and find itself now asking for what was available and searching for resumption of the negotiations with Netanyahu from the point that was reached with Rabin, such as the Syrians.

Those who are not satisfied with the recovery by Jordan of its land, water, and secured borders should show us the advantages that could have been gained had Jordan refrained from striking the deal exactly when it was possible.

## Palestine: From military occupation to apartheid

By Mouin Rabbani

ALMOST FROM the moment it was signed on September 13, 1993, the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangement (DOP) has by common consensus been "in crisis" and "on the verge of collapse." Since the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister of Israel in May 1996, these dire warnings have gradually been replaced by the more morbid diagnoses of "clinically dead" or, more simply, "deceased."

Simultaneously, opportunities for renewed global euphoria and self-congratulation, such as that presented by the adoption of the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron on January 15, 1997, are increasingly fewer, further between and shorter in duration. Rather, it is the armed confrontations which erupted throughout the occupied Palestinian territories in September 1996 which are viewed as the shape of things to come.

From the perspective of Palestinian national rights and Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, the above nuances are somewhat trivial, because Oslo was a dead letter from the outset. The essential prerequisite for a durable resolution of this conflict, Palestinian self-determination, was purposely left unmentioned in both the DOP and each of the subsequent Israeli-Palestinian agreements. No less important, these texts have consistently been implemented in a manner designed to make the prospects for its attainment ever more remote.

It is in this respect worth remembering that Oslo was the brainchild of the dovish wing of the Israeli Labour Party, that all but one of the relevant agreements were concluded prior to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, and that since his assumption of power Netanyahu has made more compromises with Oslo than it has with him. In practical terms, Netanyahu's main deviation from his predecessors has been in the substantively insignificant realms of attitude and rhetoric. The more germane policies of accelerated colonisation, of economic warfare and systematic abuse of human rights, of an increasingly formalised system of apartheid, were, along with the fundamental Zionist principle of non-recognition of Palestinian national rights, inherited from the previous government. While the Netanyahu administration's manner is certainly more aggressive and provocative than that of the suave Peres, the available evidence conclusively demonstrates that the former basically picked up where the latter left off. Repeated claims by the militant settler lobby that the previous government was in fact more responsive to their demands than the current one only serve to underline the point that, in its broad outlines, Netanyahu's programme is novel only insofar as it is being implemented by a novice.

While the crisis in Palestinian rights is real enough, it is not this which has been exercising the minds of most commentators and causing them to predict Armageddon. Rather, their con-

cerns are for the integrity and sustainability of what is conventionally termed the peace process itself. In this view, a tangible, reciprocal and, most important, dynamic process of expanding self-government for Palestinians and increasing security for Israelis, culminating in a permanent settlement based upon the principle of land for peace, forms the inviolable prerequisite for the successful implementation of the Oslo accords.

## Harbinger of catastrophe

From this perspective, the fundamental breakdown of the formula, symbolised by Israel's systematic procrastination in redeploying its forces away from Palestinian population centres and represented most visibly by Palestinian suicide bombings in Israeli cities, is widely considered a harbinger of catastrophe. Some observers have opined that the relevant agreements are themselves too vague and self-contradictory to produce the required results, and were thus a recipe for failure all along. More often, however, the gloomy forecasts derive from a perceived refusal by the parties directly involved to respect deadlines and commitments explicitly agreed on, and their violations of what is held to be the spirit of Oslo. Netanyahu's current insistence on retaining absolute control of at least 60 per cent of the West Bank at least throughout the interim phase, and his American patrons' refusal to force the implementation of the further redeployments agreed on in the Hebron Protocol (and simultaneous insistence on a monopoly of sponsorship of the Oslo process) are likened to the final nail in the Nordic coffin.

To the extent that adherents of Oslo view it as a framework for the comprehensive resolution of the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinians, and more generally a key link in producing an overall Israeli-Arab settlement, it has indeed failed them. Thus, while Oslo's proponents generally consider a two-stage solution as the most desirable, if not the only viable formula for a permanent settlement, they are faced with the uncomfortable reality that the only partitionist solution on offer is one in which the pre-1967 boundaries have become wholly irrelevant. Rather, the West Bank and Gaza Strip (excluding Jerusalem and its environs) have themselves already been effectively partitioned, into an enclaved and fragmented Palestinian entity, and a Jewish province known to its inhabitants as Judea-Samaria-Azza (or YESHA by its Hebrew acronym) and which has been wholly absorbed by the Israeli state. The Palestinian entity, a state in name only and an ethnic reservation in all but name, will furthermore exist within rather than alongside its menacing neighbour. Needless to say, this reality has put existing Arab-Israeli peace treaties under considerable strain rather than paved the way for additional agreements.

It is of course true that the dis- possession of the Palestinian people long preceded Oslo, but the bantustanisation of the question of Palestine is its direct and intended outcome. In this regard, few arguments are as disingenu-

ous as those which place the blame for the current crisis solely or primarily on Netanyahu's shoulders (as if it began only after his election) and which knowingly claim that Peres would in effect have entirely reversed the course he and Rabin chose from 1993 onwards had the Labour Party been reelected. It is indeed true Israeli negotiators during the Rabin-Peres years made numerous intimations to their eager Palestinian interlocutors at Oslo and during subsequent sessions which collectively could be interpreted as a commitment to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 in a manner not entirely inconsistent with the international community's interpretation of this resolution.

**With the Palestinians incapable of challenging the status quo, Israel refusing to offer a permanent settlement acceptable to any Palestinian leadership intent on surviving legitimately, and the U.S. having made a strategic choice to substitute the illusions of process for the requirements of peace, the current impasse can continue for quite some time.**

More important, however, such confidences were never formalised, and any resulting documents never ratified, whilst the formal agreements which did result from such negotiations, each superseding its predecessor, progressively constricted the possibilities for meaningful decolonisation. (The metamorphosis of Oslo's withdrawal clause into a three-staged redeployment the scope of which was subsequently left to Israel's sole discretion by the U.S. is but a case in point). And no sooner did the ink on such agreements dry than their implementation, determined primarily by the gross imbalance of power between Israel and the Palestinians and removed from any form of international arbitration, ensured that, in the absence of an Israeli civil war or full-scale Arab-Israeli hostilities, 242 (to say nothing of U.N. resolutions which actually mention the Palestinian people) will remain just ink on paper.

## A reflection of the balance of power

While Oslo has set back the cause of Palestinian self-determination by at least a generation, has failed to develop into a process leading to a viable Israeli-Palestinian permanent settlement, and is therefore in a seemingly permanent state of crisis, it would be mistaken to conclude that its demise is imminent. The revolutionary transformation in Israeli-Palestinian relations initiated in the Norwegian capital was, ultimately, the product of more significant changes in the regional and international balance of power, symbolised by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and establishment of American global hegemony, the Gulf crisis and the bankruptcy of the PLO. As such, the Israeli-Palestinian arrangements since 1993 will more likely than not survive in their fundamental respects as long as the current regional and international orders perpetuate themselves.

With the Palestinians incapable of challenging the status quo, Israel refusing to offer a permanent settlement acceptable to any Palestinian leadership intent on surviving legitimately, and the U.S. having made a strategic choice to substitute the illusions of process for the requirements of peace, the current impasse can continue for quite some time. More to the point, what is today in impasse is likely to become a permanent arrangement of sorts, or rather a pattern of relations sustained by and ultimately dependent on the regional and international balance of forces which produced it.

In this scenario, both further violence initiated by various detractors of the functional partition of the occupied territories and further normalisation among its beneficiaries are to be expected. A piecemeal expansion of the territory under Palestinian Authority rule, a unilateral and this time successful declaration of Palestinian statehood within these enclaves (perhaps in due course giving way to Jordanian supremacy in at least the West Bank fragments), and Israeli annexation of most of the occupied territories are developments which can all be easily contained within the current framework, even if accompanied by periodic organised blood-letting. While the possibility of full-scale hostilities leading to mass expulsion along the lines of 1948 and 1967 can of course not be dismissed, barring extreme developments an Israeli politician proposing the reconquest of Jabalya and the Nablus qasaba is more likely to be sent to a psychiatric ward than elected prime minister.

Ultimately, the balance of power which has resulted in the formalisation of Palestinian dispossession must and will change. Indeed, there are subtle indications that it is already doing so, and the latest crisis in Iraq suggests that the question of Palestine continues to play a central role in regional politics and retain a capacity to serve as a unifying factor for the Arab World. Stronger yet, it appears to be one among many catalysts for the reordering of regional (and perhaps eventually international)

## A Palestinian national framework

To simply conclude, however, that several million Israelis can never succeed in permanently lording it over several hundred million Arabs, and that in view of the current desultory situation any strategic change is by definition welcome, would be disastrous. If the conflict were merely one of numbers, Israel would never have been established, and bad situations furthermore have a habit of getting worse. Rather, Palestinians must seek to actively influence the impending changes to their advantage, and in doing so themselves propose (and, no less important, pursue) agendas which do not compromise their inalienable rights. To continue to do otherwise is to remain on the margins of others' designs.

First and foremost, the Palestinian people must reestablish a national framework, on sound democratic and pluralistic foundations, which accommodates, or rather reunites, its increasingly disparate and apathetic elements. Unless and until this cardinal challenge is effectively addressed, the remobilisation of the Palestinians is a non-starter and internal strife a constant threat, rendering other efforts futile and doomed to failure.

Second, the strategic choices and partnerships made during the past decade need to be critically reassessed and appropriate conclusions drawn. The propositions that Palestine will be liberated by Saddam Hussein, Uri Savir or Dennis Ross have all been tried and failed miserably. Rather, it was as the common cause of the Arab World, as the international symbol of the struggle against dispossession and occupation and for the right to exist, and as the result of an interconnecting web of alliances the world over the claim for Palestinian self-determination became internationally accepted. While unprecedented access to the corridors of power in Washington and London may be a welcome addition, as a substitute it amounts to very little. Furthermore, one need only look at the Zionist experience to conclude that the neglect of basic alliance founded upon shared interests reduces rather than enhances the effectiveness of such access.

Finally, Palestinians need to think imaginatively about the future. Statehood, which during the past decade has effectively displaced self-determination in official Palestinian parlance, is probably imminent but, in the form it will take, certain to be a poor response to the question of Palestine. Partition, which in fairness to the proponents of statehood was considered one and the same, had much to recommend it between 1974 and 1994, but as a result of Oslo it is no longer a viable option. This is because of the transformation of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories into a Mediterranean South Africa. A struggle against apartheid requires different strategies and different resolutions from a struggle against military occupation. It is time that these be considered.

— Middle East International

By Ray Hanania

JUST two weeks after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the world received the news that the PLO had agreed to a new stage of the peace process. The news was greeted with a mix of hope and skepticism. Some saw it as a step towards a lasting peace, while others were wary of the PLO's intentions. The PLO's new stance was seen as a departure from its previous position, which had been more confrontational. The world was watching to see if this new approach would lead to a more stable and peaceful Middle East.

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Provincial F  
Russia, a once thriving provinc



# Features

## Arabs on the Titanic: Sharing the pain but not the glory

By Ray Hanania

WITH JUST two words, "Yalla Habibi," audiences around the world received their first hint that aboard the ill-fated voyage of the Titanic were passengers of Arab heritage.

Although the brief words survived the editor's cut, the three and one-half hour blockbuster movie skipped past the tragedy of its Arab passengers, whom witnesses said had the liveliest parties and celebrated four on-board weddings.

All told, there were only 706 survivors of the 2,223 passengers and crew who sailed on the maiden voyage of the Titanic. There were 74 passengers whose names were obviously of Arab heritage.

(Although one Arab survivor and several other sources contend there were more than 165 Arabs on board, I searched and reviewed every name on the passenger and crew and business concessionaire list and only could identify 74 names that were obviously of Arab heritage.)

All the Arab passengers were ticketed "Third Class," except four who travelled "Second Class," — distinctions that related to accommodations and the price of the boarding pass. Only 33 Arabs survived, rescued by the Carpathia, living to share their personal tales of horror, having witnessed entire families drown as the ship slowly sank into the deep, dark seas of the Atlantic Ocean.

Like many events in history, Arabs experience the pain, but receive little glory.

Director John Cameron drew on the ethnicity of other passengers in making the 11 Academy Award-winning film including a lively Irish "haffi" and featuring characters of Swedish, Italian, Irish and English heritage.

It's not easy to read through the lengthy list of passengers, let alone decipher who was or was not of Arab heritage. We can only guess in some instances, and my instinct tells me the number, 74, is slightly low.

Titanic sailed from Southampton, England on April 10, 1912. The largest ship ever built, it made stops at Cherbourg, France, where some of the Arab passengers boarded, and Queenstown, Ireland, before heading out to the high seas for its intended destination, New York City.

There were not enough life boats to carry all the passengers to safety. Those in the Third Class galleys, in the lower decks, found themselves cast aside by a frantic ship's crew desperate to escort the First Class passengers to safety.

The barriers that divided the Third Class passengers from the rest of the ship were broken only after the passengers realised that the ship was sinking.

Two hours and forty minutes after the Titanic struck the iceberg, the ship disappeared into the sea. Most of those who died, including 42 Arab passengers, died from hypothermia in the arctic-like cold waters, not because they drowned. Among the survivors was the ship's parent company representative, Joseph Bruce Ismay, who survived to testify before lengthy U.S. Senate hearings several days later in New York. His cowardice, taking a seat on a lifeboat before other passengers, was well documented.

Not told at these hearings were the remorseful tales of tragedy that accompanied the Arab passengers, some of whom departed on the voyage with visions of new futures in new worlds. We know of their stories thanks in large part to people like Philip Hind and Michael A. Findlay, who wrote an informative memorial to the Titanic on the World Wide Web.

Here are some of the brief stories and profiles, followed by a complete list of the Arab passengers who survived and who perished on April 14, 1912.

Banoura Ayoub (Listed often as Ayout Banoura): In her early teens, Ayoub was travelling from Lebanon to Detroit, Michigan where she was to be re-united with her family. She travelled with her cousins, Shawnee George Wahbee, Thomas Tannous, Gerious Youseff and Tannous Doharr, who were to continue through Detroit to Youngstown, Ohio, where today a large Arab American community flourishes.

Shawnee (profiled below) and Ayoub survived. All three men, travelling to find jobs at the steel mills in Youngstown, died. Banoura Ayoub eventually moved to Windsor, Ontario, Canada, another centre of Arab growth.

Thomas Tannous is reportedly related to the family of Danny Thomas (Jacobs).

Mrs. George Joseph Wahbee, known as Shawnee Abi Saab.

The better known of the Arabs who travelled on the Titanic was born in Thoun, Lebanon on Palm Sunday, 1874. (In Arabic, the name Shawnee means Palm Sunday). She was the youngest of seven children, the daughter of Thomas George Abi-Sab and Katoole Deeb Abi-Saab. She married George Joseph Wahbee and came to America in 1906, hoping to make enough money to return to Lebanon and buy land for her family. But, when her husband died in 1908, she remained in Youngstown, Ohio, where she raised her children, Joseph, Thomas, Albert, Rose and Mary, who had stayed behind in Lebanon.

## Why does the Titanic so fascinate us? It's a story about the hour of our death

By Robert Fisk

THE TITANIC sank on my father's thirteenth birthday. He always remembered the day, not just because his Birkenhead home was across the Mersey from the head office of the White Star Line but because the Fisks were seafarers. My grandfather Edward was an officer on the Cutty Sark, a 19th-century snapshot of the tea clipper's crew in Sydney — now in the museum aboard the restored sailing ship at Greenwich — contains a face that looks startlingly similar to my own.

Four decades later, my mum and dad took me to see A Night to Remember at the old Maidstone Granada cinema. I still recall how my mother reached for her handkerchief as Kenneth More — playing an avuncular Second Officer Lightholler — gently took a sleeping child from the arms of his doomed father and put the little boy in the lifeboat.

Three years ago, I was talking to the daughter of a Titanic victim in the tiny Lebanese Christian village of Kfar Mishki: 123 Lebanese went down on the Titanic but their families received no compensation from the White Star Line — they had boarded as wait-listed passengers at Cherbourg and their names were thus never entered on the official passenger list. Their fate is represented in James Cameron's new film by a demeaning three-second scene of a man in Turkish clothes trying to translate a list of the liner's emergency instructions.

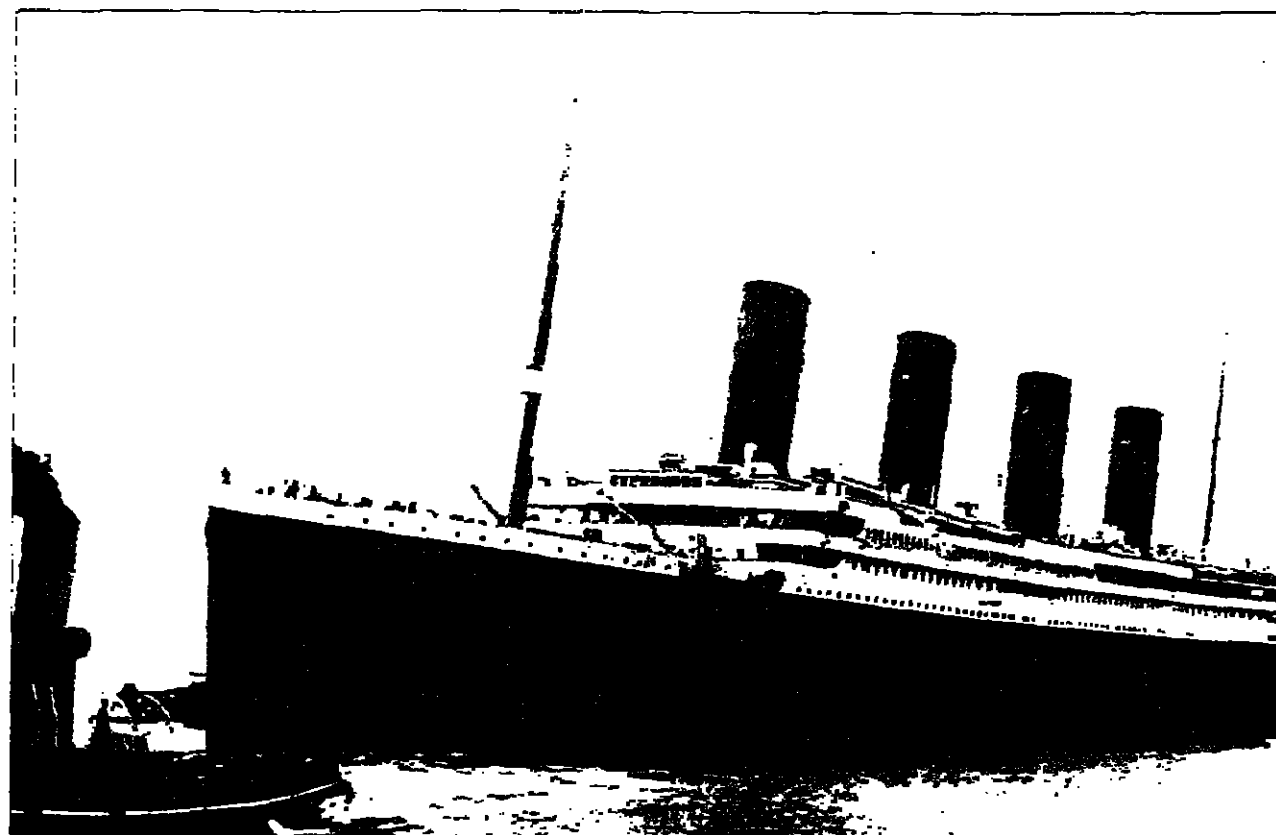
Yet, the publicity surrounding the latest sinkapic cannot account for our fascination with the Titanic. On a flight out of Beirut recently, I found three passengers — two Lebanese and a Frenchman — reading

books about the ship, one of them Walter Lord's original account of the disaster that inspired A Night to Remember, another Robert Ballard's record of his underwater discovery of the wreck.

Of course, the disaster has long been regarded as symbolic — of the class system that lay like a cancer at the heart of British society, of the arrogance of power that would be swept away in the world war which broke out two years later. And it's easy to see how the nobility of sacrifice shown by those who believed in women and children first — the rules of war which held true in the 19th century — was abandoned amid the final savagery aboard the doomed ship when "every man for himself" was so soon to encapsulate the chaos of our 20th-century wars.

Several Arabs have insisted to me that the ship's fate proves how false are our superior claims for Western technology (along with Cruise missiles), Stealth bombers and other anti-Saddam devices) and that God truly proved greater than man when the Titanic went down (God presumably being represented by the iceberg). Yet far away, in Dublin, Kevin Myers has been arguing in the Irish Times that the new awareness of the vessel's fate should help his countrymen come to regard the Titanic as an Irish story. It was, after all, designed by Irishmen and built by Irishmen (at Harland and Wolff in Belfast).

I partially subscribe to this theory, although it is not a romantic one: in reality, the Irish built the ship, the British sank it — and drowned a lot of Irishmen and women in the process. But it was the last great Anglo-Irish project before the 1916 Rising (which was also, in its way, an Anglo-Irish



The Titanic, photographed by the Daily Mirror prior to its maiden voyage

project, though with somewhat greater ramifications). Andrews, the Irish designer, remains one of the tragedy's heroes, along with Captain Smyth, who spent some of his minutes issuing his crew with guns to control the crowds round the lifeboats.

It was George Bernard Shaw (another Irishman) who saw through our hypocrisy. Only the English, he wrote after the sinking, could turn into a hero a man who steered his brand new liner at full speed into an iceberg and then started shooting his passengers.

In Cameron's new version of the disaster, it is First Officer Murdoch who starts shooting (at Irishmen, of course) as the steering hordes try to save their lives.

And it is significant — though missed by the critics — that the new Titanic is distinctly anti-British. Courage is shown by the "unsink-

able" Mollie Browne but especially by the fictitious American Winslett-DiCaprio duo. British passengers are almost invariably stuck-up, deceitful or violent. Kenneth More's avuncular Lightholler has been replaced by a nightmare school prefect who points his revolver at the steering hordes and screams at them: "Get back — or I'll shoot you all like dogs."

But the star of all the Titanic films — and of our fascination — remains the ship itself. Fr F.W. Browne was an Irish priest who travelled on the very first Southampton-Queenstown sector of the Titanic's transatlantic route and took a remarkable series of photographs of the first day and a half of the doomed voyage. His last picture of the Titanic — the very last photograph ever — shows a ship of grace and power, sinkable perhaps but too beautiful to die, a

vessel whose streamlined funnels speak of the future rather than the past.

Some have suggested a sexual message in the Titanic saga, the virgin ship on its maiden voyage ravaged by the iceberg. In an earlier American film of the sinking — in which George C. Scott plays a bug-eyed Captain Smyth — a female Titanic passenger is raped by a White Star Line crew member only three minutes before the iceberg is seen penetrating the vulnerable iron skin of the ship.

Ultimately, the ship is one reason why Titanic could win no best actor awards. Because the best actor is the machine which, in an odd way, makes Cameron's repulsive 10 seconds of silence for the dead at the Oscars ceremony — that's one Hollywood second for every 150 victims — all the more seedy.

Yet there is one sequence in the film of unmistakable beauty and power, a few seconds that explain the ship's enduring fascination. It shows the Titanic on its last day, disappearing in the late afternoon across a massive expanse of pale green Atlantic as the old lady survivor recounts her story. "It was the last time," she says, "that sunlight would ever shine upon the Titanic." And it is this element of inevitable death that draws the world back, again and again to that April night in 1912. Glorious to the end, its lights blazing over the night-time sea, the story of the Titanic is about the hour of our death. I think that's why my father — dead these last six years — often talked about the ship that died on his birthday.

The Independent

boat with our hearts in our throats. Then we saw it sink." Shawnee was cared for by the Hebrew Sheltering Society when she arrived in New York. She later boarded a train for Youngstown after being paid \$150 by the White Star Line for her lost belongings.

Witnesses and relatives reported that when she left for Lebanon to see her dying son, her hair was jet black. A year after the Titanic tragedy, her hair was completely white.

Gerious Youseff: From Lebanon, travelling with the passengers named above, Youseff died; his body was recovered in the aftermath of the Titanic sinking (Body label #312). He was buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on May 10, 1912.

Little else is known about the lives of the other Arabs who perished on that dreadful evening.

Not all the Arab passengers were ever fully identified.

Following is the list of names, based on common recognition, of the 74 passengers who were reportedly among 165 Arabs whose tragedies are a part of the immortal tale of the sinking of the Titanic. (Survivors are identified following their listing.)

Second Class Passengers: Marie Thuillard Jerwan (Survivor), Nicholas Nasrallah Nasser, Adele Nasrallah Nasser (S), Ellen Toomey (S); Third Class Passengers, Ali Ahmed, William Ali, Gerious Assaf, Mariana Assaf (S), Ali Assam, Makala Antalah, Solomon Antalah, Banoura Ayoub (S), Tannous Betros (S), Akar Boulos (S), Hanna

Boulos (S), Joseph Sultana Boulos (S), Laura Boulos (S), Joseph Kareem Caram, Maria Elias Kareem Caram, Nassef Belmenly Cassem (S), Emir Farres Chebab (S), Elias Dibo, Tannous Doharr, Elias Elias, John Elias, Joseph Elias, Shawnee George Joseph Wahbee (S), M. Houssein Hassan, Betros Khalil, Zahie Khalil, Saad Khalil, Neshan Krekorian, Sarkis Lahowd, Ali Lam (S), Len Lam, Fahim Leeni (S), Hanna Mamee (S), Hanna Mansour, Fatima Masselmanny (S), Hanna Moubarek (S), Amenia Moubarek (S), George Moubarek (S), William Geogre Moubarek (S), Maria Nackid (S), Said Nackid (S), Mary Mowad Nackid (S), Toufik Nahill, Adele Kiamie Najib (S), Mustafa Nasr, Saade Jean Nassr, Razi Raibid, Khalil Saad (S), Amin Saad, Elias Samaan, Hanna Samaan, Yousef Samaan, Arsun Sirayanian, Thomas Tannous, Thelma Thomas (S), Assad Alexander Thomas (S), Charles Thomas, John Thomas, John Thomas Jr., Assad Torfa, Anna Razi Tourma (S), George Tourma (S), Hannah Tourma (S), Anna Sofia Turja (S), Yousef Wazli, Antoni Yasbeck, Celiney Alexander Yasbeck (S), Gerious Youseff, Hileni Zabour, Tamini Zabour.

The writer is a Palestinian Arab American author and journalist. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

## Provincial Russian town hopes to regain its former splendour

By Dorothea Huelsemeier

ROSTOV-VELIKI — The sleepy provincial town of Rostov, with its picturesque Kremlin and dozens of churches with their onion-shaped steeples, has seen better times.

Lining the town's snow-covered streets are two-storied buildings, slanted by the wind, dating back to the last century. Panes are missing in many windows, the doors are sealed shut.

Behind the yellowed facades of what was once the commercial district is a picture of destruction. Only the supporting pillars of the buildings are still standing, surrounded by piles of rubble.

Once upon a time back in the 12th century, the town 190 kilometres from Moscow and one of the oldest in all of Russia, had gained its designation "Veliki" — "the great" — because of its

wealth. Such an honour was only bestowed on the north Russian city Novgorod.

Rostov belongs to the towns comprising the "golden ring" of Old Russian cities circling Moscow with their important monasteries. Up till the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was still a favourite tourist destination.

But in the new period of a market economy, Mayor Anatoly Rudenko, 56, and the town's former Communist Party leader, is plagued by innumerable worries. His main one is how he can help the down-on-its-luck town of 35,000 regain its splendour.

Tourists are staying away because there are no services, not even a hotel. The textile factory is dormant because it can't compete. The four monasteries and the Kremlin citadel are dilapidated while the churches are closed because there is no

money for their restoration.

Teachers, doctors and other city employees are waiting for their back wages, even though former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had declared on December 31, 1997 that all Moscow's debts to the provinces had been paid off.

Speaking of money: Rudenko again recently called in the directors of Rostov's 18 factories for a meeting in the grim white socialist-style mayor's office to demand that they pay their taxes.

Later, the mayor would dryly comment that the demand was "purely prophylactic" since he knows he cannot rely on funds from Moscow. Last year, Rostov should have received 43 million roubles (\$7.1 million) from the state coffers for social welfare. The town hasn't seen any of that money.

— DPA



Rostov, Russia, a once thriving provincial city, is now down on its luck (DPA photo)



## Rising operational costs bring up dilemma of public transport fares

By Isam Qadmani  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government is currently reexamining public transport fares but a decision in this regard has not yet been taken, according to officials at the Ministry of Transport.

The ministry normally announces slight increases in fares from time to time depending on developments in the transport situation in the Kingdom and the operational costs, according to the sources who preferred anonymity.

Recently, the ministry raised bus fares between Amman and Sweileh by 15 fils to become 100 fils. The increase was deemed necessary in view of the longer route taken by the bus commuting between the two destinations.

Bus transport companies have been demanding that the government increase

the fares claiming that owners have sustained losses but ministry officials say that any increase should be coupled by a modernisation of the vehicles and improvement of the service.

Isam Hijazi, manager of the Hijazi bus transport company, complained that the Ministry of Transport has been promising some action but studies conducted on increasing fares normally end up on the shelf.

He claimed that the present fares do not represent the actual operational costs noting that the transport companies are now paying more for insurance, fuel and workers' wages while the fares remain unchanged.

The Hijazi transport company operates a bus service between Amman and the northern city of Irbid charging 820 fils per passenger. The fare has not been

changed for many years.

Mr. Hijazi said his company has brought in modern vehicles at a time when the route between Amman and Irbid was extended as it now passes through Jerash. He said that the ministry has promised to raise the fare to JD1.150 but nothing has yet materialised and the company is now operating at a loss.

Mohammad Khashman, manager of the Esbilleh transport company supported Mr. Hijazi's demands but he said that increases should be made gradually.

He said that operational cost rose by 400 per cent over the past ten years in terms of customs, fuel, workers' wages, spareparts and insurance noting that the losses have adversely affected the transport service and rendered the transport companies unable to improve the service.

## Jordan cement firm sale faces domestic opposition

By Suleiman Al Khalidi  
Reuters

AMMAN — Jordan's plan to sell a 33 per cent stake in its sole cement firm may be hurt by stiff domestic opposition, part of a growing public debate on privatisation, investors and officials said Saturday.

They said internal opposition by the firm's board and a vocal parliamentary opposition to the sale of the shares to a strategic international partner have combined to put curbs on the latest step to proceed with the sale.

This week the government, after almost two years of indecision, awarded leading Egyptian investment bank EFG Hermes the mandate to act as its financial adviser to the sale.

The government has until recently preferred the sale to a strategic foreign investor in the industry.

Awarding the adviser role to EFG Hermes does not rule out such a sale, but the government has begun to suggest it was open to other options, including a private

placement.

"This would be the beginning of the end of the company if the government insists on a strategic partner (investor)," said Hamdi Al Tabaa, chairman of Jordan Cement Factories.

The firm's own board unanimously told the government it was against a strategic partner, which the firm feared would then gain a veto over decisions on production and exports.

Investors say political infighting combined with a public debate which has vilified privatisation as asset-stripping amid nationalist fears of foreign control of the economy may put brakes on the government's drive to conclude the deal soon.

Some decision-makers are now leaning towards offering the sale to local investors or a long-term Arab investor.

The selection of Hermes, the only regional outfit competing against nine international investment banks, has caused ripples in international investment circles, with some saying such a choice may discourage them from

considering Jordan in future deals.

Officials confirmed the Egyptian firm was chosen after a World Bank scoring system giving a 60-40 per cent weighting respectively to technical and financial proposals, which critics say tilts the balance to the most price competitive.

Jordan Cement Factories, a blue-chip firm and one of the jewels in Jordan's limited sell-off of holdings, is 49.6 per cent owned by the government. It enjoys a monopoly until 2001.

The last year has been a difficult time for the firm as demand has slumped from Asia and uncertainty hung over the fate of the Middle East peace process, hampering prospects of capturing the lucrative Palestinian market.

The other nine investment banks which met a deadline of Feb. 28 to submit proposals were Merrill Lynch, Salomon Brothers, Citibank, Flemings, Credit Commercial Francais, Credit Agricole (Indo Suez), Societe Generale, HSBC and KPMG.

They presented financial proposed fees which ranged from 0.375 per cent to 1.9 per cent of the transaction size.

But Hermes topped a short list of four, ahead of Salomon, Credit Agricole (Indo Suez) and Merrill Lynch, with its highest score on technical evaluation helped by a competitive 0.40 per cent pricing, investors say.

One French firm was disqualified because it had a deal with a cement producer who was interested in acquiring a stake.

The government, lacking a coherent privatisation scheme, has wavered since it first announced the plans to sell a substantial share as part of an IMF-directed privatisation.

It had a disappointing start in an attempt to attract international cement producers such as French Lafarge, whom the government thought would help harness expertise and infuse much needed capital to help the firm undertake ambitious multi-million dollar expansion schemes.

The latest effort at World Bank behest came last year when it was decided a financial adviser would best expedite the deal, estimated to bring as much as \$100 million to government coffers once it is concluded, investors say.

## Indonesia pursues new IMF reform deal

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia announced Saturday implementation of the first of a series of new reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to lift the nation out of deep economic crisis.

The official Antara news agency said the government had issued a presidential decree asking companies to report the extent of their overseas debt, one of the major problems bedeviling the economy.

Indonesian companies owe some \$74 billion in overseas debt, and the burden has cast a long shadow over efforts to pull the nation out of its worst economic crisis in decades.

On Friday, the government announced a 117-point reform package aimed at ending the crisis and announced target dates for implementation of all key points. Some 46 have already been implemented.

It said efforts would be made at once to help debtors and creditors resolve the private debt problem.

The decree calling for the debt reports, dated April 8, said companies should, within two weeks, provide the government with details of principal and interest rates, lending conditions, grace periods if any and names of creditors.

Companies which fail to comply will be subject

to administrative penalties in accordance with law, it said.

This decree will provide the first estimate of the amount of debt that needs to be restructured, the government said.

Meanwhile, the United States welcomed Indonesia's new reform package and offered \$1 billion in trade finance as an incentive for President Suharto to implement the measures.

"The key to its success is the Indonesian government's implementation now and over the long term," U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said in a statement.

Citing the agreement, the U.S. Export-Import Bank said it was willing

to provide up to \$1 billion in short-term financing to Jakarta. The short-term financing would help U.S. exporters do business in Indonesia and help Indonesian firms buy U.S. goods.

The reform deal unveiled Friday was Indonesia's third such agreement with the IMF in less than six months. The programme, agreed after more than three weeks of talks, will overhaul the way business is done in Indonesia if fully implemented.

Hoping to convince sceptics this will be done, the government set target dates for implementing all key points. It promised a new anti-monopoly law by the end of the year, moves to set up a bankruptcy law and a special bankruptcy court by April 22 and regulations for winding up of companies, mergers and acquisitions by the end of September.

The government promised transparent and competitive bidding for public infrastructure contracts, ministerial statements and newspaper advertisements to explain official decisions, and


procedures to deal with public complaints.

"This agreement supports a comprehensive programme designed to restore financial stability and growth in Indonesia," Mr. Rubin said. "The United States and the international community have a major stake in seeing Indonesia succeed in its efforts."

The Export-Import Bank said it was "encouraged" by Indonesia's progress in addressing the country's financing and banking problems.

"I believe that the implementation of IMF reforms is essential for Indonesia in its recovery programme for the benefit of its local economy," bank chairman, James Harmon, said in a statement.

"The bank has remained open to consider credit-worthy business in Indonesia, and with proper structuring, is willing to significantly increase short-term financing to provide a bridge to long-term economic growth for U.S. exporters and the Indonesian economy," he added.



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### THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com

**ACROSS**

- Necklace units
- Green shade
- Casino calculation
- Used used candles
- Eastern leader
- 8 on a sundial
- Trigonal
- Curd of misconception
- Rendering harmless
- Home
- Fixed charge
- Al or Bobby of auto racing
- Crafty critter
- Prevarications
- Island just south of Naxos
- Effort novel, "Adam"
- Nonconformist
- Red explorer?
- High-pitched blues
- Machu Picchu resident
- Hias no confidence in
- "Nana" star
- Very dry, as wine
- Famous cookie man
- Human seat
- Bar for lifting
- Icons
- Reverse
- Beitell
- Calamities
- Mobutu Sese Seko's country
- Urban roads: abbr.
- End of demo?
- Aquatic mammal
- Manufactured
- Various functions
- Robin homes

**DOWN**

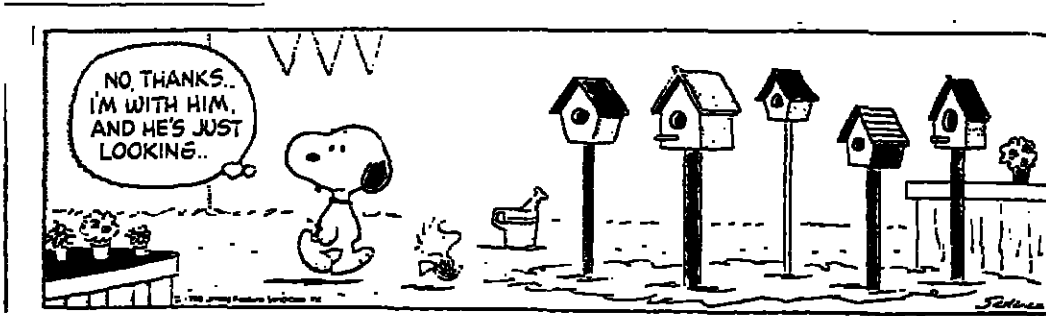
- Thin wire nails
- Too weird
- Elite social category

**AMMAN** ASPICA CHAN  
LONI BAILS ROSA  
POCAHONTAS APER  
STEWART PONTIAC  
ALTOS ROE  
SKATES INTERNET  
LOCHES OGEES ALE  
ARIA ABNER GILA  
NED SNOOD NEVER  
GASMETER SIRENS  
AMI AMINO  
GOCHISE APTNESS  
OPAL KINGPHILIP  
MIRE IRENE MIDIT  
BEAR DEBAR OASIS

**40** Utters in a frenzy  
**44** Cup rim  
**45** Aggressive giantess  
**47** Wipe memory  
**49** Ways to walk  
**50** Well-plumed bird

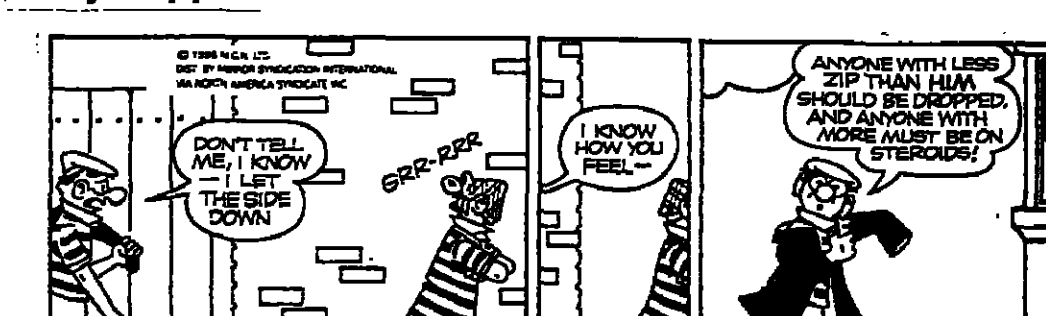
**51** Oracles  
**52** Genesis character  
**53** Operatic prima donna  
**55** "Dies" (day of wrath)  
**56** Macho jets  
**58** Fort Worth sch.

### Peanuts



NO THANKS, I'M WITH HIM, AND HE'S JUST LOOKING...


### Andy Capp



DON'T TELL ME, I KNOW I LET THE SIDE DOWN

ANYONE WITH LESS ZIP THAN HIM SHOULD BE DROPPED, AND ANYONE WITH MORE MUST BE ON STEROIDS!

### Mutt'n' Jeff



QUIET, YOU! CAN'T YOU READ THIS IS A HOSPITAL ZONE!

OH, SORRY OFFICER! I WAS CALLING A TAXI!

NOW, MOVE ALONG, AND BE QUIET ABOUT IT!

## HOROSCOPE

### FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Check out the possibilities during the day, but don't make a final decision until tonight. By then you'll be more sensible about it. During the day, you'll be more apt to be swayed by a pretty face or a compelling argument.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You continue to be very influential. You're not doing much talking, but you're doing a lot of listening. That gives you the advantage right there. You know where the other people stand, not only physically, but also intellectually.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) This is a great day to clean your closets. If you haven't worn it in over three years, get rid of it. There's someone in the world who will appreciate it more than you do. Once you create some space, you'll have an excuse to go shopping.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) The controversy continues. You don't really like conflicts, although some of your friends and family seem to relish them. Not to worry. By this evening, tempers will cool down and a compromise might even be reached.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) It looks like more money is coming in again today. This could be from an inheritance, legacy or gift, or simply something you find. Clean out your closet and garage. You might discover that an item you've owned for years has appreciated in value.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Errands may keep you busy for most of the day, but save a time for a special treat. Is there a beautiful place you can get to before nightfall? You and your mate need the reward.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) To all outward appearances, you're merely doing your shopping. But internally, you're having a raging debate over just about every item you consider. Later in the day you shop, the easier it will be for you to make decisions.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) You'll be getting stronger, and that's a welcome relief. There are several things to be checked off your list. The more you can complete before noon, the more powerful you'll be later in the day.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Your workload is about to increase, so you'd better get prepared. Unfortunately, you're more in the mood to play. If you early want to make your life easier, you'll do some planning tonight to ensure that you're ready.


**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) This is a better day to play with friends. If you don't have an invitation already, call around and generate one. People will be excited to have you come over. That's probably a better idea than having everybody over to your place.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) You may run into a conflict with an older person during the middle of the day. Prepare yourself this morning. You're in a good position to win this argument, especially if you've done your homework.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) It will be easier to make a sensible decision now. You've been spending money without forethought. You have that tendency anyway, but lately it's been awful. Now you'll shop for bargains with renewed enthusiasm. Start this morning, with a garage sale.

**Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst.**

### THE BETTER HALF, By Glasbergen



"Midlife crisis?"

### JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

**LIWLT**  
**NUKKS**  
**DREBIG**  
**NEWECH**

Answers: LIWLT, NUKKS, DREBIG, NEWECH

Yesterday's Jumbles: AFOOT PANSY MOTIVE GYRATE  
Answer: Why the debater was a good fencer — HE GOT THE POINT

## Business

### Thousands of Jobs at Egypt's Sh...

### Jordan Kuwait E... merge during se...

### REUTERS

### The Business

Currency	USD	DEM	SFR
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9360	1.9360
DE Mark	0.5457	1.0000	1.9360
GB Sterling	1.6775	1.9471	1.9360
CH Franc	2.5604	1.2527	2.9968
JP Yen	0.0079	1.4158	1.9360
CA Dollar	0.7013	1.3049	1.9360
IT Lira	0.0006	1.2111	1.9360
NL Guilder	0.4872	88.76	1.9360
FR Franc	0.1637	2.0585	1.9360

Oil	Last	Revised
Brent	13.27	12.92
N. Texas	15.57	15.67
Brent	13.27	12.92
Dubai	12.14	11.74
U.S. Gas	153.00	0.00

Metal	Sid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	310.25	311.25
Silver (oz's)	6.45	6.48
Palladium (oz's)	426	429
Al (3 Months)	1426	1442
Cu (3 Months)	1782	1787
Zinc (3 Months)	1142	1146
Lead (3 Months)	535	537
Ni (3 Months)	5370	5390

Commodity	Last	Offer
Coffee (c/lbs)	147.82	148.00
Cocoa (S/ton)	1824	1824
Sugar (S/ton)	255.6	255.6
Wheat (S/ton)	255.6	255.6
Soy (c/lbs)	28.02	28.02
Tea (S/kg)	148	148
Banana (S/box)	0	0
Rice (S/ton)	460	460

### STUDIO

Professionals  
1 hour a  
Develop your  
at our shop in  
JUMBO 30% larger  
Free 30  
28 x 30 cm  
Shmelly  
Grindery  
Phone: 5  
Sweetfish





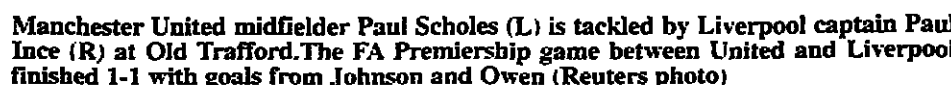


## Serbs balk at Champions League plan for Bosnia

was feeling very confident. I didn't make the mistakes — I let him make them instead." eighth-seed Carlsen said.

The tall world number 76 said he was not concerned by his failure to win any of the three previous tour finals he has contested, and said he would not think about his title drought prior to the match.

"You try not to do anything different. You just try to be focused and think of it as just another game. It's just a question of trying to be the best on the day — and I have not been that on three other occasions," he said.



deny him. United dominated the territorial play, but were mostly forced to try their luck from long range.

Andy Cole, Gary Neville, Nicky Butt and Scholes twice all fired over the bar. United manager Alex Ferguson brought on England striker Teddy Sheringham for defender Phil Neville after 65 minutes in a desperate attempt to force a winner. Liverpool, however, contin-

Then with two minutes remaining United came within inches of scoring the all important second goal. Cole beat goalkeeper Friedel in the air, but with the home fans already cheering as the ball headed towards the net Liverpool full back Rob Jones appeared from nowhere to clear off the line. Then in injury time Scholes had a clear sight of goal, but shot inches wide from about 12 yards. Following the match British bookmakers changed United's odds to win the title from 1-3 to 1-2, while Arsenal's odds were cut from 9-4 to 6-4.

The London team, who also play Newcastle in the FA Cup Final next month, are now 5-2 to win the League and Cup double.

The loss dropped the Sonics 1 1/2 games behind Utah for the best record in the Western Conference.

Rookie Tim Duncan had 28 points and 17 rebounds for San Antonio, which lost Robinson when he was knocked unconscious Wednesday by an elbow thrown by Utah's Karl Malone. He is expected to be out at least through the weekend as he recovers from a concussion.

Seattle was led by Gary Payton's 20 points.

- **Jazz 126, Clippers 109:** In Salt Lake City, Howard Easley scored a career-high 22 points as the Utah Jazz defeated the Los Angeles Clippers in their first game at the Delta Center without Karl Malone.

Malone was serving a one-game suspension for elbowing David Robinson on Wednesday. Malone, who saw his streak of 543 consecutive starts come to an end, had led the Jazz in scoring in 39

of their previous 41 games.

Jeff Hornacek had 23 points and Chris Morris, starting for the first time this season, added 16 for the Jazz.

The Jazz won their sixth straight game and 10th home game in a row, while the Clippers lost their seventh straight.

Maurice Taylor led Los Angeles with 22 points off the bench.

- **Rockets 97, Kings 85:** In Sacramento, California, Hakeem Olajuwon had 24 points, 11 rebounds and six assists as the Houston Rockets won their third straight game.
- Clyde Drexler had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets.
- Charles Barkley reaggravated a groin injury and left the game with 10:38 remaining in the fourth quarter.
- Corliss Williamson scored 20 points and Anthony Johnson had 19 for the Kings, who have lost 15 of 16 games. Sacramento played without star guard Mitch Richmond, who has missed seven of the last nine games with a sore right knee.
- **Suns 114, Lakers 105:** In Inglewood, California, Antonio McDyess had a career-high 37 points and 11 rebounds as the Phoenix Suns defeated the Los Angeles Lakers for their first victory at the Forum in three years.

The loss snapped the Lakers' six-game winning streak and dropped them three games behind Utah in the battle for best record in the Western Conference. The Lakers also remained 1 1/2 games behind Seattle in the Pacific Division.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 24 points and Mario Bennett added 18 points and a career-high 14 rebounds for the Lakers, who had their 10-game home winning streak snapped.

have a responsibility not to recklessly swing their elbows in a manner that could cause injury to another player," said NBA senior vice president of basketball operations Rod Thorn.

PARIS (AFP) — About 110,000 World Cup tickets will be on sale by telephone to fans from 18 European countries from 8 a.m. (0600 GMT) on April 22, the World Cup organising committee announced on Friday. The tickets will be for first and second round matches with the exception of the opening match between Brazil and Scotland on June 10. The tickets will go on sale in 18 countries in Europe, including Germany, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Norway, Holland, Portugal, Sweden, as long as the caller has an address in one of those countries. The reservations will be on a first come, first serve basis, with a limit of four tickets per match for each person, and an absolute limit of 16 tickets for each person. To undertake this, the organising committee are setting up an exchange with 90 operators receiving calls, and two thirds of those will be able to answer calls in many foreign languages. The numbers to call will be publicised by the organising committee on April 17.

WITH OMAR SHARIF  
 & TANNAH HIRSCH

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## TIMED TO PERFECTION

Both vulnerable. South deals.

**NORTH**

♠ 7

♥ K 10 7

♦ K 10 7

♣ A 10 7 6 4

**WEST**

♠ J 10 9 8 5

♥ Q 10

♦ A 10 8 5

♣ J 9 8

**SOUTH**

♠ A 8 5

♥ Q 10 8 5 2

♦ A 9 8

♣ A 3

♠ K 10 7 6 4

♥ K 10 7 6 4

♦ J 9 4

♣ A 8 5 2

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
10	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♣	Pass
6♣	Pass	7♣	Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

Aces and Kings are undervalued in the point count. Both North and South showed fine appreciation of their precise cards in relation to a reasonable small slam in hearts.

Once North jumped in hearts on

the second round of the auction, both players cue-bid first and second-round controls. North's singleton spade was the key holding for slam.

West led the jack of spades, and declarer realized that there was no chance of trumping deal splits 3-2. Given that, the contract hinges either on a 4-2 club division or a winning guess in diamonds. Declarer's play was a model of technique.

The ace of spades was won, followed by the ace of clubs and a club ruff. Had West overruffed, declarer would have had to hope that the defender started with three trumps and the outstanding hearts would fall under the ace-king. Since West would then have been a favorite to hold diamond length, South would have led West for the queen of diamonds. When West followed, declarer cashed the ace and king of hearts, heaving a sigh of relief when neither defender showed out. The king of clubs was cashed for a spade discard, followed by a club ruff to set up two long cards on the table. The last spade was trumped on the table and established clubs were led. East could ruff at any time, but would be the only one to lose the trick.

trick for the defense.

TODAY AT	<small>CINEMA TEL: 4634144</small> <b>PHILADELPHIA '1'</b> <i>Yusra &amp; Ilham Shahin ... in</i> <b>DANTELLA</b> <small>(ARABIC)</small> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	<small>CINEMA TEL: 4634144</small> <b>PHILADELPHIA '2'</b> <i>Morgan Freeman &amp; Ashley Judd ... in</i> <b>KISS THE GIRLS</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5697432</small> <b>PLAZA</b> <i>The biggest cinema production</i> <b>TITANIC</b> <small>(ARABIC)</small> Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5677430</small> <b>CONCORD</b> <small>ARABIC FILM</small> <b>ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI - KAMANANA</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 <small>ARABIC FILM</small> <i>Adel Imam &amp; Yusra ... in</i> <b>RISALA ILA AL WALI</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5934761</small> <b>GALLERIA 2</b> <b>ABDOUN</b> <b>GRAND OPENING</b> <b>TITANIC</b> Shows: 11:00, 2:00, 5:15, 8:30, 12:00	<small>CINEMA TEL: 5934793</small> <b>GALLERIA 1</b> <b>ABDOUN</b> <b>GRAND OPENING</b> <b>TITANIC</b> Shows: 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 <i>The film is also on at 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays</i>	<b>Hisham Yanes Theatre</b> <b>TEL: 4625155</b> <b>STARTING APRIL 6TH</b> <b>Don't Laugh Please We're Jordanian</b> <i>Starring Hisham Yanes, Amal Dabbas, Rania Kundi and the group</i> at 8:30 p.m. For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155
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# First Division Basketball Championship

## Jazireh meet Ahli in playoffs tonight

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Leaders Al Jazireh meet Al Ahli tonight in the inaugural match of the First Division Basketball Championship playoffs which kick off in two rounds concluding May 1.

Titleholders Al Jazireh top the standings on score difference and are joined by Al Orthodoxy and Al Ahli in the top three who will contest the playoffs for the first time in Jordanian basketball.

Al Jazireh had beat Al Orthodoxy 92-84 and Al Ahli 75-69 in the first round which they ended with an unbeaten streak. However, they could only manage a dismal 57-53 win over Al Ahli and lost their only match to Al Orthodoxy 73-69 in the second round.

Al Jazireh and Al Orthodoxy are therefore tied in overall points and the race for the title is expected to be closely fought among the top two with Al Ahli having the lesser chance unless they manage to beat both teams in both playoff rounds.

However, judging by the results to far, last season's runners up Al Ahli seem to stand the least

chance to make the contest a three-way race.

Their inadequate pre-season training led to an inconsistent form. They started training late as they were busier tackling technical obstacles like recruiting a coach and luring back veterans Yousef Zaghloul and Marwan Ma'touq to the lineup after missing a season.

Al Orthodoxy finished third last year but demonstrated that they were in better shape to resume their dominance of the game. Their younger lineup seem in a situation to give Al Jazireh a hard time in the fight for the title.

Al Jazireh ended a 30-year domination among

the two rivals last season. Prior to that Al Orthodoxy had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989, but Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

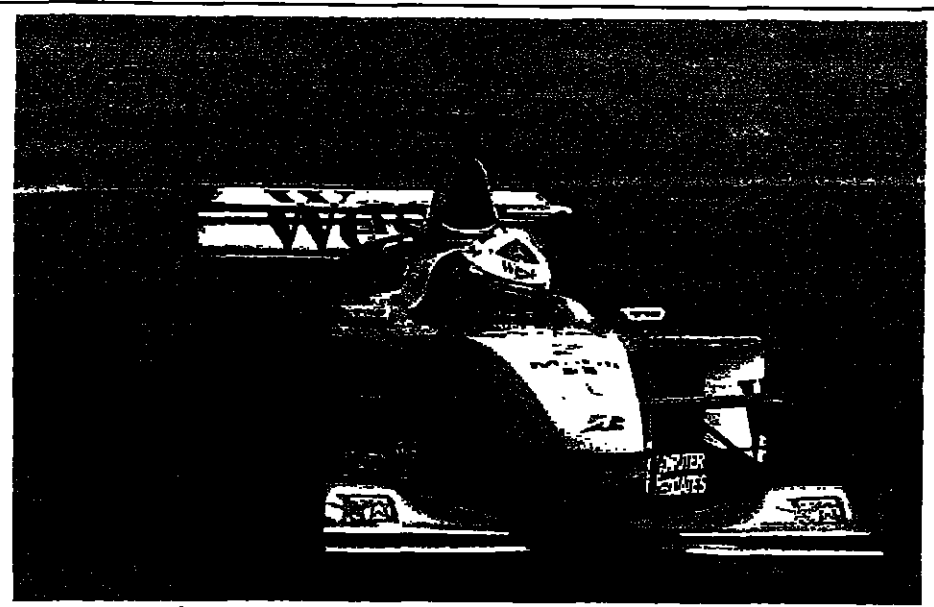
Al Orthodoxy came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996.

According to regulations Al Hussein have been relegated to the Second Division unless recent reports that the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) decided to increase First Division teams as of next season and cancel relegation this year are confirmed.

Al Jalil finished fourth and Al Jeel fifth.

### STANDINGS BEFORE PLAYOFFS

Team	P	W	L	SK	SA	Pts
Jazireh	10	9	1	890	582	19
Orthodoxy	10	9	1	837	538	19
Ahli	10	6	4	672	606	16
Jalil	10	3	7	595	735	13
Jeel	10	3	7	558	824	13
Hussein	10	-	10	547	712	10



Scotland's Formula One driver David Coulthard drives his McLaren-Mercedes Benz around a curve at the Oscar Galvez race track during the first timed session classification at the Buenos Aires Oscar Galvez track, April 10. Coulthard clocked the fastest time with 1:28.130, followed by German Michael Schumacher and Finn Mika Hakkinen. The Argentine Formula 1 Grand Prix takes place April 12 (Reuters photo)

## Yankees beat A's 17-13

NEW YORK (AP) — The Oakland A's and New York Yankees opened Yankee Stadium's 75th anniversary season with the highest scoring game ever in the stadium's history, a 17-13 Yankees' victory that was anything but Major League calibre.

Terry Pendleton's two-out single capped a three-run rally in the ninth inning and lifted the Kansas City Royals over Minnesota.

Tino Martinez hit a three-run homer, drove in five runs and scored four to lead New York. The 30 combined runs eclipsed the previous high, a 17-11 win by New York over the Philadelphia Athletics on June 3, 1933.

Shane Halter opened the inning with a single off Rick Aguilera (0-1) and moved to third on Shane Mack's single.

Consider these numbers: 30 runs, 32 hits and four errors. Add to those, 10 pitchers, 18 walks, a 12-run, 23-batter fifth inning in 4 hours and 6 minutes. It's no wonder the seventh-inning stretch received one of the day's loudest ovals.

After Mack stole second, Johnny Damon's sacrifice fly made it 4-3 and sent Mack to third.

Martinez's two-run double off Jim Dougherty (0-1) came in New York's four-run fifth as the Yankees took a 16-13 lead. Scott Brosius added four RBIs and Bernie Williams scored four runs for New York, which has won three straight to reach .500 for the first time this season.

Jose Offerman, who went 3-for-4 with two RBIs, doubled to tie it. After Hal Morris was intentionally walked, Offerman stole third. Jeff King struck out, but Pendleton lined an 0-2 pitch up the middle.

Matt Stairs had three RBIs and every regular in Oakland's lineup had scored one run and driven one in — by the end of the fifth inning.

Brian Bevil (2-0) got the victory with 2-3 innings of one-hit relief. The Royals ended a three-game losing streak.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Rangers 4, Blue Jays 3: In Arlington, Texas, the Rangers overcame two home runs by Jose Canseco, taking advantage of third baseman Ed Sprague's error to score three times in the seventh inning and beat Toronto.

Former Padres ace Andy Benes pitched eight strong innings and hit a home run, giving Arizona a 4-2 lead. Manager Buck Showalter then turned it over to Felix Rodriguez to open the ninth.

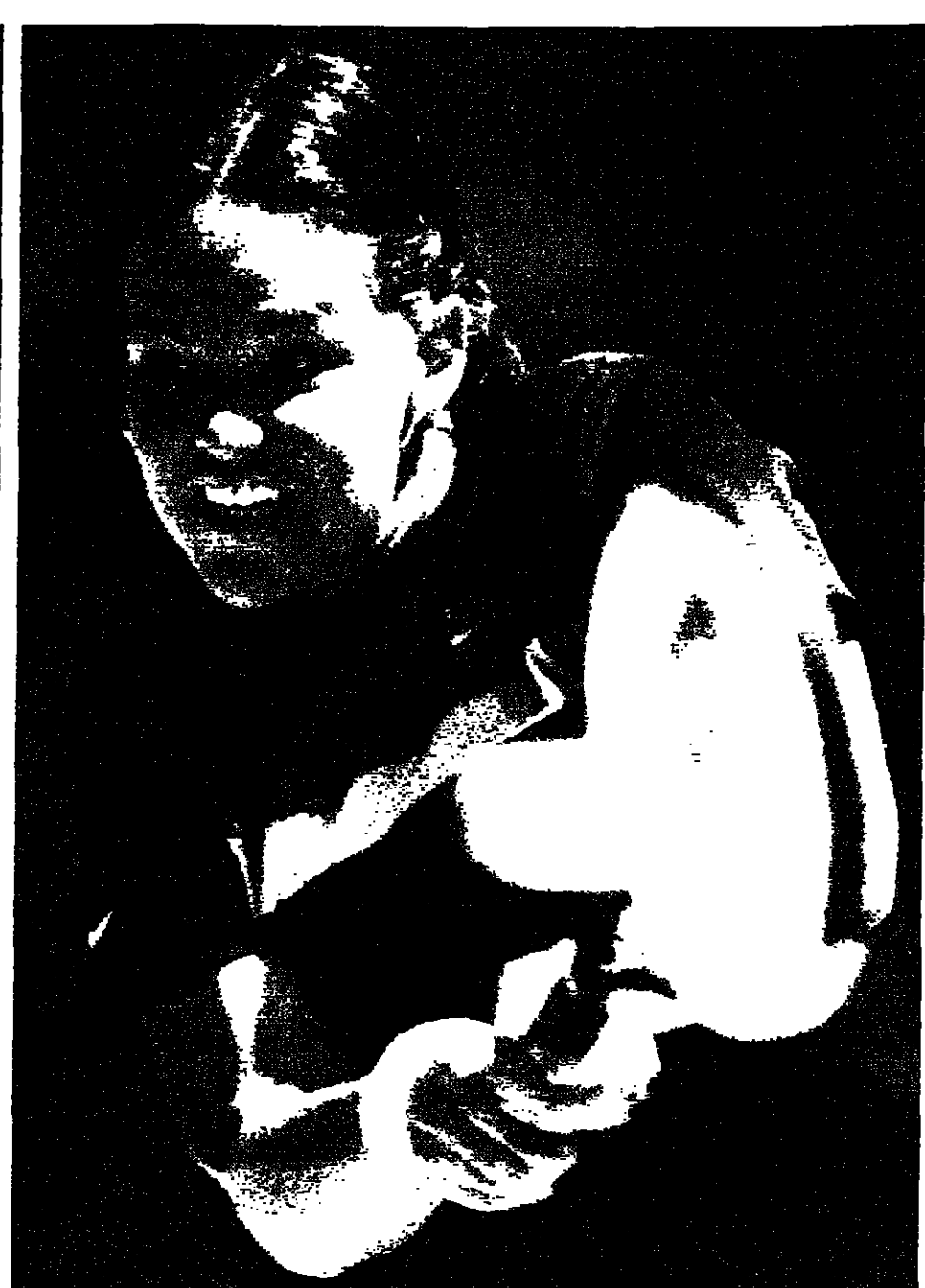
Canseco hit solo home runs in the fourth and ninth innings.

Rodriguez (0-1) gave up a leadoff single to Greg Vaughn and issued two outs to pinch-hitter Mark Sweeney and Quilvio Vera to lead the bases.

He has four home runs this season, all against Texas, and 28 career multi-homer games.

Finley connected on an 0-1 pitch for his second homer of the season.

Trailing 2-1, the Rangers loaded the bases in the seventh against Dan Plesac (0-1) on pinch-hitter Roberto Kelly's double, a walk to Mark McLemore and Rusty Greer's single.

 Dan Miceli (1-0) allowed one hit and struck out four in two scoreless innings. || Dodgers 7, Astros 2: In Los Angeles, Mike Piazza became the first player to hit grand slams in consecutive games for the Los Angeles Dodgers, highlighting a victory over the Houston Astros. |
| Piazza's seventh career grand slam — he did not hit one all last season — came on a 3-0 pitch in the eighth inning from reliever Mike Magnante. |
| It marked the first time the Dodgers as a team had grand slams in consecutive games since August 1-2, 1986, when Greg Brock and Enos Cabell connected against Cincinnati's Mario Soto and John Franco at Dodger Stadium. |
| Ramon Martinez (2-1) struck out 10 in eight innings. He gave up two runs and four hits in eight innings. Shane Reynolds (1-1) was the loser. |
| Reds 18, Rockies 7: In Denver, Barry Larkin's first hit of the season highlighted an eight-run seventh inning, and the Cincinnati Reds ended a four-game losing streak by roughing up Darryl Kile and the Colorado Rockies. |
| Bret Boone and Chris Stynes each had four hits, including a home run. Eduardo Perez homered and drove in four runs for the Reds, who had 17 hits. |
| Larkin, hampered by a neck problem, had been 0-for-10 this year before his two-run double put the Reds ahead 5-4 in the seventh. Eddie Taubensee followed with an RBI single that chased Kile (1-2). |
| Giants 5, Cardinals 3: In San Francisco, pinch-hitter Marvin Benard singled home the go-ahead run with two outs in the eighth inning, sending the San Francisco Giants past the St. Louis Cardinals. |
| J.T. Snow doubled off John Frascatore (0-1) with one out and advanced on Stan Javier's groundout. Benard batted for Julian Tavaraz (1-1) and singled for a 4-3 lead. |
| Royals 5, Twins 4: In Kansas City, Missouri, |


Lindsay Davenport

## Davenport avenges loss to Kournikova

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida (AFP) — Lindsay Davenport defeated Anna Kournikova 7-5, 6-3 Friday to reach the semi-finals of the WTA Tour event here, avenging her loss to the Russian teen in the Lipton quarter-finals.

Kournikova, 16, ousted Davenport in the quarters en route to the final at Lipton two weeks ago, where she lost to American Venus Williams.

Davenport, 21 and the top seed here, paid her back on Friday and kept

alive her own campaign for a second title of the year.

Davenport defeated World No. 1 Martina Hingis of Switzerland in the finals of the Pan Pacific Open at Tokyo two months ago.

Davenport will face fourth-seeded Mary Pierce of France. Pierce, a two-time finalist here, downed Iva Majoli of Croatia 6-3, 6-2.

Sixth seed Conchita Martinez of Spain also advanced to the semi-

finals with a 6-4, 7-5 victory over American Lisa Raymond.

Martinez, the 1995 champion, will meet second-seeded South African Amanda Coetzee, who beat U.S. wildcard Tara Snyder 6-4, 6-4.

Coetzee won her first title of the year at Hilton Head, South Carolina, on Sunday.

## Phillies edge Braves; Cubs pound Expos

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Curt Schilling won his second matchup with Greg Maddux in a week when Mike Lieberthal singled home the only run in the bottom of the ninth inning Friday night, giving the Philadelphia Phillies a 1-0 victory over the Atlanta Braves.

9 — the worst start ever for a defending World Series champion.

The worst start by a defending champion had been 1-8, an ignominious mark shared by the 1947 Cardinals, 1964 Dodgers and 1984 Orioles.

The Marlins have not won since beating the Cubs on opening day March 31 and are 0-9 in April. Their 1-9 record is a near-reversal of their 8-1 start of last season.

In his 11th career shutout, Schilling (2-0) pitched a two-hitter and struck out 10. He walked just one.

After Maddux worked eight scoreless innings, Mike Cather (0-1) relieved to start the ninth. Gregg Jefferies and Scott Rolen walked and Lieberthal grounded a one-out single up the middle that easily scored Jefferies.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Last Sunday, Schilling outduelled Maddux for a 2-1 win at Atlanta. Schilling struck out 15 in a five-hitter, and the deciding run was unearned.

In this rematch, Maddux got 15 ground ball outs and struck out five. He allowed five hits — all singles — before being lifted after 95 pitches.

Former Padres ace Andy Benes pitched eight strong innings and hit a home run, giving Arizona a 4-2 lead. Manager Buck Showalter then turned it over to Felix Rodriguez to open the ninth.

Maddux, a four-time Cy Young winner, is winless after three starts this season despite an 0.78 ERA.

Rodriguez (0-1) gave up a leadoff single to Greg Vaughn and issued two outs to pinch-hitter Mark Sweeney and Quilvio Vera to lead the bases.

Schilling has an 0.35 ERA in three starts. He has allowed just nine hits in 26 innings and struck out 34.

 Finley connected on an 0-1 pitch for his second homer of the season. || Dan Miceli (1-0) allowed one hit and struck out four in two scoreless innings. |
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| Royals 5, Twins 4: In Kansas City, Missouri, |

Cubs 13, Expos 0: In Montreal, Henry Rodriguez celebrated his return with a career-high five hits, leading Kevin Tapani and the Chicago Cubs over the Expos.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Rodriguez, traded to the Cubs last December in one of Montreal's many cost-cutting moves, hit a three-run homer that highlighted a six-run first inning.

Former Padres ace Andy Benes pitched eight strong innings and hit a home run, giving Arizona a 4-2 lead. Manager Buck Showalter then turned it over to Felix Rodriguez to open the ninth.

Rodriguez got a standing ovation from the crowd of 9,982 when he singled in the ninth inning to complete his 5-for-5 evening.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

He also drew a walk.

Tapani (2-1) pitched a three-hitter for his eighth career shutout. He also drove in a pair of runs.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Brant Brown gave the Cubs an early lead, homering on the first pitch of the game from Marc Vlahos (0-2). Brown drove in four runs as Chicago improved to 8-2 and dropped the Expos to 1-8.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Brewers 5, Mets 3: In Milwaukee, Jeremy Burnitz hit his major league-leading sixth homer in the Milwaukee Brewers' victory over the New York Mets.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Burnitz's line drive to center field off Dave Mlicki (0-1) traveled 407 feet and gave Milwaukee a 1-0 lead in the second.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Burnitz hit 27 homers last season, and is off to an even better start after nine games this year.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The Brewers, the National League newcomers who had never faced the Mets before, added four runs in the sixth — thanks to a major league record-tying three intentional walks — on two-run doubles by Marc Newfield and Mark Loreta.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Pirates 4, Marlins 1: In Pittsburgh, the Florida Marlins' unprecedented first-to-worst slide continued with a club-record ninth consecutive loss to the Pirates and rookie Jose Silva.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 4: In San Diego, Steve Finley hit a grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the San Diego Padres rallied for their fifth straight win, beating the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Jose Guillen and Lou Collier tripled within a span of three batters in a three-run second inning as the talent-depleted Marlins fell to 1-

## Top seed Rafter into semifinals

CHENNAI, India (AFP) — Top seed Patrick Rafter was stretched for two hours 23 minutes by little-known German Lars Burgsmuller before advancing into the semi-finals of the Gold Flake Open with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, 7-5 victory.

The Australian next takes on another marathon man, Leander Paes who took one minute less to claim a 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 7-5 win over Gerard Solves of France.

Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom kept on track to successfully defend his title when he outlasted third-seeded Australian Mark Woodforde 6-3, 2-6, 7-6 (7/3) in yet another close encounter that lasted nearly two hours.

cent but in the third set I was very happy with my energy level and the way I lasted."

Woodforde had a more potent serve than Tillstrom and was the more aggressive competitor, but Tillstrom often punished his opponent with a succession of precision passes.

The Australian had a golden opportunity in the final set when he held a break point to lead 5-3 and serve for the match, but Tillstrom denied him with a winning volley and then broke Woodforde in the next game. All week, Paes

has struggled to maintain a good start, and his tussle with Solves who had shocked Boris Becker in the previous round, was no exception.

The Indian number one held points for a 5-1 lead, but the Frenchman fought back to earn a tiebreak. Paes levelled the match at one set all when a fine volley earned him the only break of the second set to lead 5-4. In the final set, Solves put a forehand into the net to give Paes a decisive break for 6-5.

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# Iraq wants British oil meeting plan scrapped

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's parliament on Saturday unanimously condemned Britain's "evil" plan for an international conference on expediting implementation of an enhanced U.N. "oil-for-food" deal with Baghdad.

The national assembly, which discussed the idea at the start of its spring session, said it planned to contact parliamentary unions worldwide "to uncover the evil aims" of the British proposal and to call for aborting it.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Al Sahhaf on Friday urged a boycott of the conference, which British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has said would discuss how to implement effectively an increase in the amount of oil Iraq can sell to \$5.2 billion every six months, from the current \$2 billion.

The 250-member assembly accused Britain of trying to keep U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990 after its invasion of Kuwait, dragging on and to by-pass a deal signed with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in February which defused the latest crisis over U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq.

"The national assembly representing the free Iraqi people rejects the British proposal in its entirety and denounces the feverish endeavours by the London government in collusion with the American administration, which has reaped disappointment and isolation as a result of its conspiratorial stand in the latest crisis," the parliament said in a statement.

The MPs voted to adopt the statement, issued by the assembly's external affairs and legal affairs committees.

Mr. Cook said last month that the meeting grouping all key bodies, including U.N. agencies and various non-governmental groups, would look at the best ways of spending the money and at what programmes would be implemented.

"Britain is trying to capitalise on its leadership of the European Union currently to rally support to the American-British design, which is isolated from that of the rest of the world community, to by-pass Iraq's Feb. 23, 1998, agreement with the United Nations," the parliament said.

The MPs voted to adopt the statement, issued by the assembly's external affairs and legal affairs committees. The session was chaired by Deputy Speaker Ghanem Khadouri, in the absence of Speaker Saadoun Hammadi, who was on a visit to Namibia.

Speaking at an inter-parliamentary union conference in Namibia, Mr. Hammadi told reporters that Baghdad had implemented the required U.N. resolutions and the Security Council should lift the embargo.

In remarks carried by the official Iraqi News Agency, he also stressed Iraq's insistence that the deal with Mr. Annan be implemented swiftly. He said 1.5 million Iraqis had died from shortages of food and medicine since 1990.

The parliamentary statement said Britain and the United States were "seeking once again to assume the role of the controlling guardian over the international organisation [United Nations] and to discuss its affairs and implement the Security Council resolutions on Iraq outside the Council."

It accused Britain and the United States of trying to sideline Mr. Annan "after he reached a balanced political deal with Iraq, aborting the military aggression conspiracy for which the Washington-London alliance mobilised all its evil capability."

British naval forces had joined a U.S. armada which remains poised in the Gulf. But U.N. officials say a new chapter in relations with Baghdad began after the successful completion of the first round of inspections of Iraq's eight so-called presidential sites under the February deal.

Britain and the United States have accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of deliberately blocking the oil-for-food scheme and say he is to blame for his people's suffering.

"The London government aims from holding this so-called humanitarian conference to burden the decision to lift the embargo with conditions that Iraq will not accept so that the suffering of its people continues," the statement added.

It said Iraq had dealt positively with all proposals to implement the oil-for-food deal both in terms of the funds involved and improving its implementation to achieve the humanitarian goal.

"Talks continue between Iraq's government and the United Nations over the requirements of Iraqi crude oil exports, after the designated sum was increased, according to what suits our current national ability to pump oil," the statement said.

Iraq says it cannot meet in full the new production quota because of technical problems caused by damage during the Gulf war and the sanctions and due to low oil prices.

## Albright presses Lebanon to consider Israeli pullout offer

BEIRUT (AFP) — International pressure is mounting on Lebanon to consider Israel's proposal to withdraw its troops from south Lebanon after 20 years of occupation, if its security needs are met.

A Lebanese official said Saturday that U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sent a message to Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bweiz, currently in Paris, urging Beirut to "seriously" study the Israeli offer.

"This proposition deserves to be studied seriously and does not contradict the peace process," Ms. Albright's message said, according to the Lebanese source.

The Israeli cabinet last week approved U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 adopted in 1978 calling for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, but made the retreat conditional on border security arrangements with Beirut.

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai "is sincere in his desire for a withdrawal from south Lebanon," according to Ms. Albright's message, sent to Mr. Bweiz via a U.S. diplomat in the French capital, the official said.

France, a traditional friend of Lebanon, said the Israeli offer constitutes a "positive gesture" and is a step "in the right direction," though Paris has said Resolution 425 must be applied "without condition and without delay."

French Foreign Affairs Minister spokesperson Anne Gazeau-Secret said that a "lasting peace cannot be established except in the terms of a universal peace involving not only Israel and Lebanon but also Israel and Syria."

But Saudi Arabia on Saturday said it backed Lebanon and Syria in opposing the Israeli offer.

"The Saudi government stands with Lebanon and Syria in insisting on an unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the territories it occupies in the south of Lebanon," said the statement published by the official SPA news agency.

Riyadh also said negotiations between Israel and Syria "should resume" to unblock the Middle East peace process. Both Lebanon and Syria have rejected the Israeli security demands and said the Jewish state should comply with Resolution 425 "unconditionally."

Even before the Israeli cabinet's approval, U.N. chief Kofi Annan said that the parameters for applying U.N. resolutions could be negotiable.

"I have always maintained that Security Council resolutions were binding and must be respected and applied," he said during a visit to Israel late last month.

"But in the last analysis, it is the parties concerned which must speak, negotiate, and accept the compromises necessary for applying the resolutions. They are not self-imposed."

In a statement released Apr. 2, the United Nations said that "respect of [any Israeli] withdrawal would require some discussions with all the concerned parties to be totally effective. The secretary general asks all parties to participate in this process."

Lebanese diplomatic sources said Saturday that the June renewal of the mandate of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) could offer the Security Council a chance to establish the parameters for applying Resolution 425.

Under Resolution 425 UNIFIL is tasked with "confirming the pullback of Israeli forces and reestablishing peace and international security" in the region.

Lebanon and Syria have called the Israeli withdrawal offer a "manoeuvre" aimed at separating the Lebanese and Syrian tracks in peace negotiations.

Syria demands that any deal on Lebanon be tied to Israeli agreement to withdraw from the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

Peace negotiations between Syria and Israel have been suspended since February 1996.

## British carrier docks at Bahrain seaport

MINA SULMAN (AP) — The British carrier HMS Illustrious, patrolling a no-fly zone in southern Iraq, docked here Saturday to replenish the ship's supplies and give a break to its crew before leaving the Gulf.

Illustrious, which arrived in the Gulf last month, "is expected to leave shortly," said Captain Stephen Meyer, commander of the aircraft carrier.

He did not specify a date for its departure but the British embassy in Bahrain said the carrier would leave by the middle of this month.

Capt. Meyer told reporters that warplanes aboard the 20,000-tonne carrier flew several missions daily to the no-fly zone in southern Iraq and "there were no disturbances at all from the Iraqis."

"Iraqis appear to be cooperating much more with the United Nations," said Capt. Meyer.

Britain and the United States had threatened military action after Iraq refused to open suspected weapons sites to U.N. arms inspections.

Britain is sending three Tornado fighter jets to Kuwait to replace the ill-fated Kuwait already serves as a base for nine British Tornados which were sent to the region at the height of the Iraqi standoff with the United States.

annual commemorations at many tombs of religious figures. This year, the occasion coincided with the eight-day Jewish Passover in Israel and with Easter celebrations which have attracted thousands of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem.

In the past two years, Palestinian National Authority has taken control of the celebration, providing security and organising the event so that each day a different town in the West Bank sends participants.

Friday was supposed to set aside for Jericho and Jerusalem residents, but Palestinians from throughout the West Bank showed up, with families setting up picnics and smoking waterpipes inside the tomb's 316 rooms and outside its walls.

Sufi groups held ritual chants outside, swaying to rhythmic music and chanting the name of Allah, while a more secular horde of peddlers descended on the event to sell trinkets and sweets to the crowd.

Even barbers show up, due to some traditions which place blessings on getting a haircut during the religious feast.



IN RESPECT FOR BUDDHA'S TOOTH: Female Buddhist disciples lay their long hair on the ground to show their respect to the sacred tooth of the Lord Buddha during a ceremony at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei Saturday. Some 20,000 worshippers and officials took part in the ceremony held in honour of the tooth relic and to pray for the peace and stability of the island. The tooth relic, given to Taiwan by a Tibetan Buddhist master, is thought to be one of only three such teeth that exist in the world (Reuters photo)

## Tlass: Clinton signed paper on Israeli pullout from Golan

BEIRUT (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton signed a document containing an agreement by Israel's previous Labour government to withdraw from the Golan Heights, according to Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass.

"The Labour Israeli government committed to withdraw its troops to the June 4, 1967 lines, and that commitment was confirmed in a message from the president of the United States," Mr. Tlass said in an interview with the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Quds.

Al Arabi.

He said the document was in the possession of Syrian President Hafez Al Assad.

"I don't know when President Assad will make it public. He will decide on an opportune moment," Mr. Tlass said, according to the interview, which was carried by the Lebanese press agency Al Markaziya on Saturday.

Syria has repeatedly claimed that Israel's previous government had committed to withdrawing from the Golan Heights before its suspended peace talks in February 1996 following a wave of attacks in Israel which killed 58 people.

The Jewish state seized the Golan Heights during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war and illegally annexed the strategic plateau in 1981.

Mr. Tlass also used the interview to launch an attack on U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"Since this woman, this Zionist Jew, took up her post, American policy has fallen to an all-time low," he said.

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## Mir's cosmonauts head into open space to replace orientation engine

MOSCOW (AP) — The two Russian cosmonauts on the Mir will head into open space Saturday for the first of three such missions aimed at replacing an engine that keeps the station properly aligned toward the sun.

The old thruster engine ran out of fuel during the previous spacewalk last week, forcing the cosmonauts to rush back to the station and switch on another engine that restored the Mir's orientation.

On Saturday, the two cosmonauts — Talgat Musabayev and Nikolai Budarin — will remove the thruster, which operated since 1992. Orientation engines are not rechargeable and need to be replaced

when fuel runs out. The spacewalk is to begin shortly after 2 p.m. Moscow time, and would last for about six hours, according to Mission Control spokesman Valery Lyudin.

After dismantling the engine, the cosmonauts plan to begin repairs of the station's Elektron oxygen generator, installing a valve that would control the removal of hydrogen from the station. Later, they will proceed to repair the generator from inside the station.

The Mir doesn't suffer oxygen shortages, since the station has a second fully operational Elektron generator, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

On the next two spacewalks, scheduled for April 17 and 22, the cosmonauts will install a new orientation engine.

The third man on the Mir, NASA astronaut Andrew Thomas, will remain inside the station during this month's spacewalks, filming his colleagues' progress, as he has done in the past.

After a series of accidents and breakdowns last year, the 12-year-old Mir has been largely trouble-free in recent months. Russian space officials hope to keep the station manned at least until next year, when a new international space station should be ready to handle a crew.

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rolling Stone drummer Ron Wood had good reason to thank the paparazzi when they rescued him from a blazing pleasure boat after one of its engines blew up. Wood was one of 11 passengers on the vessel just off the Brazilian coast south of Rio de Janeiro when there was an explosion in one engine. One passenger jumped into the sea as the boat caught fire, but a pursuing boat hired by press photographers drew up and plucked them all to safety. Wood is in Brazil for the South American leg of the latest Rolling Stones' "Bridges of Babylon" tour.

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Jackson wins slander suit

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A jury has ruled that a man who claimed he had a video tape of Michael Jackson having sex with a minor must pay the pop star \$2.7 million in damages. Jackson sued Victor Gutierrez in 1995 after Gutierrez said on television that he possessed such a videotape. Gutierrez also released a book entitled "Michael Jackson Was My Lover." Gutierrez refused to present evidence that the charges were true, citing a California law allowing journalists to protect sources' confidentiality.

## Sandra Bullock gets ready for summer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sandra Bullock has declared the year of the thong. Inspired by a trip to Brazil, the actress has decided that "just once in my life, even if it's for one day, I am going to stand on the front of my boat in a thong." Bullock has been eating better and exercising since January. Eight weeks ago, she started a regime called the Zone. "It's just the basic principle of balanced eating," said the reformed junk-food junkie. "I've lost [6 kg], and I've taken [9 cm] off my butt." Bullock told InStyle magazine. Bring on the thong!

## Sudden stardom left Tomei jittery

NEW YORK (AP) — Marisa Tomei says her sudden stardom from "My Cousin Vinny" left her jittery. After winning an Oscar in 1993 for her second film, she said she felt "a little exposed all of a sudden, like I was just naked out there. I guess I got a little scared." That's why Tomei went against the Hollywood grain and took on quirky roles in smaller films such as "Untamed Heart" and "Unhook the Stars." "I chose to play a lot of different characters with some young directors and learn as I went along," she said in the Daily News.

## Paparazzi save Rolling Stone drummer

LONDON (AFP) — Rolling Stone drummer Ron Wood had good reason to thank the paparazzi when they rescued him from a blazing pleasure boat after one of its engines blew up. Wood was one of 11 passengers on the vessel just off the Brazilian coast south of Rio de Janeiro when there was an explosion in one engine. One passenger jumped into the sea as the boat caught fire, but a pursuing boat hired by press photographers drew up and plucked them all to safety. Wood is in Brazil for the South American leg of the latest Rolling Stones' "Bridges of Babylon" tour.

## Cannes Film Festival live on Internet

PARIS (AFP) — For all those unable to travel to sunny southern France, the star-struck Cannes Film Festival has decided to go virtual, transmitting live its much-awaited procession of stars on Internet. One of the highlights of the annual festival, the stars' walk up the stairs on ceremony night, should be sent round the world via the world wide web on the festival's official site: <http://www.festival-cannes.com>. Surfers will be offered 60 minutes of images of the festival each day, including press conferences, and a full description of the films running in the festival.

## Thousands of Palestinians celebrate Moses and Salaheddin in annual celebration

JERICHO (AFP) — While Jews mark Passover and Christians celebrate Easter, thousands of Palestinians are praying and dancing at an Islamic and national celebration held yearly at a tomb of Moses reportedly built by the Arab hero Salaheddin.

Some 20,000 Palestinians from all over the West Bank have gathered to the tomb of Moses outside the town of Jericho in the Jordan Valley for the two weeks of celebrations, which began Friday.

"This place holds a both religious and a political meaning at the same time," said Hassan Al Shbeib, a resident of Jericho who joined the celebrations.

"Politically, the celebration underlines that the Palestinian lands are Islamic and Arab, despite Israeli attempts to seize the land and claim it as Jewish," Mr. Shbeib told AFP.

The combined meaning of the celebration is centred around the tomb, one of several in the area said to contain the remains of the Prophet Moses, revered by Muslims as well as Jews and Christians.

The Arab ruler Salaheddin is said to have built the tomb, one of a number of Islamic religious monuments he built after conquering Jerusalem in 1187 from the Crusaders, to compete with sites to which Christian pilgrims flocked.

"We are restoring the glory of Salaheddin and following in the tradition which he set down for all Muslims," said Sheikh Mohammad Ismail Al Jamal.

Large crowds have turned out for decades at Moses' Tomb for his "mawlid," or birthdate, marked by Muslim mystics, the Sufis, who hold

annual commemorations at many tombs of religious figures.

This year, the occasion coincided with the eight-day Jewish Passover in Israel and with Easter celebrations which have attracted thousands of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem.

In the past two years, Palestinian National Authority has taken control of the celebration, providing security and organising the event so that each day a different town in the West Bank sends participants.

Friday was supposed to set aside for Jericho and Jerusalem residents, but Palestinians from throughout the West Bank showed up, with families setting up picnics and smoking waterpipes inside the tomb's 316 rooms and outside its walls.

Sufi groups held ritual chants outside, swaying to rhythmic music and chanting the name of Allah, while a more secular horde of peddlers descended on the event to sell trinkets and sweets to the crowd.

Even barbers show up, due to some traditions which place blessings on getting a haircut during the religious feast.

"I've come here for years because there's always great demand," said one barber, Ezzat Al Zureidi, who came the 140 kilometre trip from the West Bank town of Tulikarem for the occasion.

Masoud Eid, 75, said he remembered the older days of the celebration, which had a "different taste to them."

"All the families of Jerusalem would drive in caravans of camels and horses to Jericho, with Sufi dancers and mock battles with swords and staffs.

Families would camp out at the tomb for days," Mr. Eid said.

Hajja Um Shawqat, an elderly woman from Tulikarem, said she had come to celebration for purely religious reasons. "It is a blessing to visit this tomb, just like it is to pray at Al Aqsa," she said, referring to Islam's third holiest site in Jerusalem's Old City.

In some Islamic traditions, the Prophet Mohammad is said to have passed by this tomb of Moses during his mystical journey from Mecca to Al Aqsa.

Israeli attacks guerrilla bases

ABABAYEH (AP) — Israeli forces moved guerrilla positions in southern Lebanon. Two Israeli jets fired six air-to-ground missiles near the desert village of Sabra. A Hizbullah stronghold in southern Lebanon bordering Jordan, speaking Lebanese security officials, speaking of a "condition of anarchy" in the area, but there were no casualties from the attack. The second on July 1997, in a Hizbullah camp. The area is used by guerrilla groups as a base to launch attacks and their allied Lebanese militia occupied zone.

Volume 23 Number 6809

## Majali reit 'to honour

ABABAYEH (AP) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Jaber Sunday called on the nation to honour its constitution, respect the rule of law and achieve a comprehensive peace. He urged a meeting of the cabinet to discuss the situation in Lebanon. Jaber also called on the Lebanese people to support the government and the army in the fight against terrorism. He said the government was committed to achieving a comprehensive peace and to restoring the rule of law in the country. He also called on the Lebanese people to support the government and the army in the fight against terrorism.

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## Christians

JERUSALEM (AP) — In a candlelit ceremony, Christians in Jerusalem celebrated the feast of the Ascension of Jesus Christ. The ceremony took place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, one of the most sacred sites in Christianity. Thousands of Christians gathered for the service, which was led by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. The patriarch prayed for peace in the Holy Land and for the well-being of the people of the world. He also called on Christians to live lives of faith and hope.

An Iraqi child, a member of an armed group, was seen in a photograph. The child was wearing a military uniform and holding a rifle. The photograph was taken in a conflict zone in Iraq. The child's presence in the military is a violation of international law, which prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces. The photograph serves as a stark reminder of the impact of conflict on children.